



NATO Foundation  
*Defense College*

# BALKAN AND BLACK SEA PERSPECTIVES 2023



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High-Level Conference organised by  
*the NATO Defense College Foundation*

in co-operation with  
*the NATO Public Diplomacy Division,*  
*the NATO Defense College,*  
*Philip Morris Italy, Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo,*  
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***Balkan and Black Sea Perspectives 2023***

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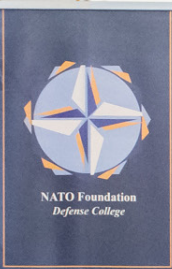
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ALESSANDRO MINUTO RIZZO  
*President, NATO Defense College Foundation,  
Rome*



## FOREWORD

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This conference is dedicated to the Balkans and Black Sea perspectives. We have a focus on this region since already a decade and we continue to do so because we are addressing issues close to our interests and values. I am speaking of South Eastern Europe, in other words this large historic area that spans from the shores of the Adriatic to those of the Black Sea.

A special part of Europe, at the crossroads of many cultures and influences, rich in history and in humanity, of great strategic importance. It represents a priority from many points of view, first of all in political terms. It has always been crucial for European security. But today it is true more than ever, as we live in a fast-changing international environment where threats and opportunities come from various angles, where the wisdom of our nations is called into question by difficult choices.

Let's remember that our continent is witnessing war and violence to an unprecedented extent since the end of the Second World War. Ukraine is still subject to a brutal Russian invasion, that has no justification and is the source of suffering and destruction that are intolerable. It is our moral duty to continue to support the aggressed country and its people as much as possible.

We consider that the Balkan and Black Sea region should become part of the Euro-Atlantic community and, in this sense, the invasion of Ukraine has given a new sense of urgency. NATO is still upholding the open-door policy and the European Union is active in implementing a policy of inclusion that has roots in Summit<sup>1</sup> declarations dating twenty years ago. Today a renewed effort is underway towards full integration.

The region is also a complex one due to its history, for different reasons, from local nationalisms to fragile economies and embattled democracies, while illegal trafficking, organised crime and environmental damages remain widespread. This

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/PRES\\_03\\_163](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/PRES_03_163).

is a good reason to accompany those nations and their people from fragmentation to inclusion, from instability to long term security, to modern government and an accomplished rule of law.

I like to underline that NATO and the European Union are working hand in hand, in line with their respective added values and in the same direction. The direction being the objective of full inclusion. NATO remains in Kosovo with its ongoing Kosovo Force (KFOR) deployment (Operation Joint Enterprise), keeping the same aim proven over the 24 years of security projection. We shall not forget that the region is subject to internal strife and external malign foreign influences, Russia being an actor in this respect. It is also worth recalling that in a few days general elections are going to take place in Serbia. It is an historic country and I sincerely hope that it is going to retake its place in the mainstream of European history and also in its institutions.

The Foundation is addressing a number of issues that are not always at the centre of the international discussion but are relevant. Our tradition is to promote a friendly conversation aimed at finding good solutions and at encouraging the actors to continue in their ongoing efforts.

As usual, the spirit of the event is international to promote an informed debate at a scientific level with a spirit of respect, and we are encouraged by the recognition that the region has an international priority.

Following our tradition, we give a priority to the voices coming from the region, because nobody can substitute them. This is the tenth conference on those issues, and I welcome a large number of speakers and moderators of high value and well proven experience. I wish to thank them warmly for having accepted the invitation to Rome, which is a natural and privileged place for a thorough discussion on the region.

The conference will touch several crucial issues, of general relevance, under the catchword of resilience: this is a fundamental instrument to accompany the aspiration to reforms and the final inclusion in the European and Euro-Atlantic institutions.

I conclude thanking first of all our staff for their enthusiasm and their very good work and thanking all those who have supported us for this conference.

After having served at the Italian Embassy in Washington DC and as Commercial Counsellor at the Embassy of Italy in Prague, Ambassador **Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo** worked as Head of the External Relations Office of the EEC from 1981 to 1986. In the following years, his career focused on Europe and Space Policy. In 1997 he was appointed Diplomatic Counsellor of the Minister of Defence Beniamino 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 and 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).



November 2023. NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg visits the Western Balkans.



WELCOME  
REMARKS







MARC OZAWA

Senior Researcher, Research Division,  
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## WELCOME REMARKS

My name is Marc Ozawa, and I am a researcher at the NATO Defense College. It is important to bear in mind why the Black Sea region and the Western Balkans are growing in importance strategically, especially for NATO. Mostly of what I am going to talk about is specifically geared to the Black Sea region. Russia has been gradually militarising this region since 2014 and even before, but at accelerated pace in 2014 with the illegal annexation of Crimea. Until recently NATO has been very much involved in the region, not only through Allies but also through Partnerships. Nevertheless, NATO has not had a coherent and clear strategy towards the region. What are the reasons? There are different perspectives about that, especially among NATO Allies littoral states in the Black Sea region.



Source: NATO. Rotational deployments in Eastern Europe.

Until recently, NATO has been very much focussed on the Baltic Sea region: after 2014 there was a considerable presence of the United States in the Black Sea region, which nevertheless began to decrease after 2016. Of course, everything changed with the Russian invasion in 2022, and Russia is currently playing its role as posing the greatest security threat in the region. In response, NATO has come into action deploying the NATO Response Force (NRF) and recalibrating the defence and deterrence posture on the Eastern flank in quite a dramatic way, bolstering its presence on the Eastern flank seven times, from 40.000 to 300.000 Readiness Force within 60 days<sup>1</sup>.

One of the more interesting points resulting from the 2023 Vilnius Summit is paragraph 79:<sup>2</sup> this is the first time that we see in a Summit Communiqué that the Black Sea region is recognised as an area of strategic importance. Looking further around the region, for better or worse, we are already seeing potential hotspots emerging not only in the Balkans, but also in the Black Sea region. Of particular concern are the developments in Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, and other Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) Member States in the South Caucasus, in Central Asia.

Although NATO – and much of the media tension – have been focussed on conventional forces in response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Russia’s grey-zone aggression continues and has been increasing over the last year. This is something that we should not forget. What is also interesting is that, for the first time, the US is approaching the region from a strategic perspective, as demonstrated by the Black Sea Security Act which has passed the Senate and may pass the House of Representatives.

From my perspective, one of the most important developments is that we are finally beginning to see wider agreement and consensus among the regional Allies in the Black Sea and Balkan region. The same Allies that, in the past, had different perspectives but are now coming more to an agreement concerning the growing threats. In the end, I am looking forward to sharing perspectives, getting to know different perspectives, but I think one of the most valuable products that can come out of this conference - and of similar events - are the relationships that we build; because policies and personalities can change but the relationships tend to last.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_49755.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49755.htm).

<sup>2</sup> Vilnius Summit Communiqué 2023, Paragraph 79: “The Black Sea region is of strategic importance for the Alliance. This is further highlighted by Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine. We underline our continued support to Allied regional efforts aimed at upholding security, safety, stability, and freedom of navigation in the Black Sea region including, as appropriate, through the 1936 Montreux Convention. We will further monitor and assess developments in the region and enhance our situational awareness, with a particular focus on the threats to our security and potential opportunities for closer cooperation with our Partners in the region, as appropriate”.

Dr **Marc Ozawa** is a Senior Researcher at the Research Division at NATO Defense College. His research examines NATO-Russian relations, hybrid conflict, and Russian and Eurasian affairs. He has previously held teaching, research and editorial positions at the University of Cambridge, IHS CERA, Yale University, and the Yale Journal of International Affairs. Dr Ozawa has taught and supervised both undergraduate and graduate level students in the subjects of international relations, Russian foreign policy, and the geopolitics of energy. He has published works on Russia's relations with its neighbours, energy security and European-Russian relations. He is a graduate of the University of Alaska (BA), Yale University (MA) and the University of Cambridge (MSt, Ph.D.). Additionally, he conducted coursework for the 82nd Energy Strategies course at Lomonosov Moscow State University and North-Eastern Federal University in Yakutsk.



NICOLA DE SANTIS

*Head, Engagements Section, Public Diplomacy  
Division, NATO HQ, Brussels*



## OPENING REMARKS

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In just a month and a half the Alliance will enter its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. At the 2024 Summit, in Washington DC, NATO leaders will continue the process of adaptation that started with the new Strategic Concept at the 2022 Madrid Summit and at the 2023 Vilnius Summit, that will push forward the Alliance into the third phase of its history.

The first phase of NATO's history was represented by the Cold War, when the Alliance — through its deterrence and defence key feature — was able to maintain peace on the European continent for the longest period since the Roman Empire. That was indeed the longest period of peace between the then sixteen NATO nations and the Alliance, and among all the European countries members of NATO.

This transatlantic dimension, the presence of the United States on the European continent during the Cold War, stabilised the West-West relations in addition to the East-West ones. The first phase of the Alliance ended when President Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty)<sup>1</sup> to recede the existing nuclear threat through the elimination of all short-range and intermediate nuclear forces of the European continent, as well as the strategic weapons threatening North America. That phase not only ended Cold War, but it inspired NATO to shift from confrontation to cooperation in the security sphere.

In November 1991 NATO made something historic: it publicly released the Alliance's New Strategic Concept: a new and revised strategic concept containing some documents that were secret, until that moment. Specifically, four of those documents were absolutely secret during Cold War.

Moving from confrontation to cooperation, NATO therefore entered the second phase of its history. It was in this historical phase that the idea of a long-term vision,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/rd/104266.htm>.

according to which the Alliance would have defended its members during Cold War, became reality. The idea of a united and peaceful Europe, representing an area in which stability and security would be extended to the emerging democracies of Central and Eastern Europe. NATO assisted this integration: it assisted, in other words, the return of democracy in Europe, reinforcing individual liberty and the rule of law of those countries that for too long had been unnaturally separated from the rest of Europe. In this way, Europe would be free and at peace again. The idea of cooperative security, also extended to the Balkans, was made concrete.

Today we have entered a different phase: Europe is not at peace anymore. Russia has shattered peace the moment it decided to invade a sovereign nation. We have the moral duty to defend Ukraine and we are actually defending a country by exerting our right of self-defence, as also enshrined into the United Nations Charter. But we are also defending our own security, the main security challenge of the transatlantic community, because we are containing Russia. It should be remembered that Russia was included in our security equation since the beginning. Indeed, it was involved in the North Atlantic Cooperation Council in November 1991, in the 1994 Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme, as well as in the 1997 Permanent Joint Council (PJC), where an ad-hoc political and practical cooperation was established within the framework of the NATO-Russia Founding Act. In 2002, in Rome, President Putin also signed the *Pratica di Mare* Agreement (NATO-Russia Relations: A New Quality - Declaration by Heads of State and Government of NATO Member States and the Russian Federation).<sup>2</sup> This document contained one of the main principles for the respect of national sovereignty of countries and the borders. A principle himself violated after the famous speech Putin gave in 2007 at the Munich Security Conference, in which all the rhetoric of the Cold War came back (with the consequent war in Georgia in 2008, the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the current war in Europe).

The war in Europe is not the only challenge we face today. The world has very much changed. We have entered the Fourth Industrial Revolution in which information technologies – and, more specifically, the transformative effect of the technological progress in all fields – has put NATO in the EU challenges.

Emerging disruptive technologies, coercive and hybrid tools not only challenge NATO and the transatlantic community in the traditional domains (i.e., air, space, and sea sectors) but also in the information and cyber spaces. In this regard, an important point which was not included in NATO's Strategic Concept during Cold War, is the emerging role of China, highlighted during the Madrid Summit in 2022.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nato.int/docu/comm/2002/0205-rome/rome-eng.pdf>

NATO is not willing to engage in conflict with either China or Russia, but we need to consider this excessive modernisation, including China's use of coercive tools and hybrid warfare, as well as its establishment of civilian infrastructures in our countries. These latter are indeed crucial to project our military power and implement NATO's crisis response in the region, like we did in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the Implementation Force (IFOR). Because this is the most important value of NATO: the ability to work in crisis management.

Regarding the Balkans, part of this transformation process involved NATO's commitment – under the United Nations Mandate in Bosnia and Herzegovina – to implement the Dayton Peace Agreement (previously initialled at Dayton and then ratified in Paris in December 1995), together with the Russian Federation. It was indeed a Russian Colonel, General Shevtsov, to be appointed as the Deputy Commander of the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) General George A. Joulwan, during the IFOR operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It should be remembered, besides, that a Russian military cell was charged with planning that operation at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), the most secretive and strategic military NATO headquarters. And still, Russia cooperated with NATO during the Kosovo Force (KFOR) operation, under the Mandate of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UMMIK), putting their efforts together to build security and stability in the region.

We continue to contribute to the security and stability of the Balkan and Black Sea region, not only through the open-door policy, but also through the integration of these countries in NATO membership. These countries are currently creating an environment of security and stability, that may also represent a benefit for Serbia. We are engaged in supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina as well, and this is the reason why NATO Secretary General visited NATO member countries in the Western Balkan region, in November 2023.<sup>3</sup>

This region has a successful story in terms of promoting the complementarity between NATO and the EU. When, in 2002, NATO and the EU agreed for the release, monitoring or recall of NATO's assets and capabilities, in the framework of the Berlin Plus Agreement, NATO committed itself to put its asset at the disposal of the European Union in case it would conduct an operation in the future, as it is actually happening with the European Union Force (EUFOR) Althea.<sup>4</sup>

The whole international community is working towards promoting the security of the region. Unfortunately, we must consider that violence is still erupting. This is evident from the attack on NATO's KFOR troops last May, or the recent

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_220279.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_220279.htm?selectedLocale=en).

<sup>4</sup> <https://shape.nato.int/page39511625>.

violent events in September, as well as the spillover conflicts in Ukraine, the malign interference in the Balkans and so on.

On the ground of this, at the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting in Brussels, Secretary General Stoltenberg called upon «Choosing dialogue and diplomacy over conflict and chaos». We are achieving this goal by assisting both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia through defence capacity building, supporting these countries to be resilient despite the security challenges and threats they face.

We want to contribute to the stability and security of our regional Partners through cooperative security and crisis management. At the same time, we commit ourselves to reinforce the security of our own member countries through NATO's deterrence and defence.

In the end, our purpose is to project security and stability so the peoples and countries of this region can flourish, perfect, and improve their democracies and be part of the Euro-Atlantic community through the membership they aspire, without leaving behind those countries who do not aspire to NATO membership as well.

Head of the Engagements Section of NATO Public Diplomacy Division since 2019, **Nicola de Santis** was previously 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's policy, political relations, individual practical cooperation programmes and better public understanding in Middle Eastern and North African countries - especially those participating in NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) and 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's 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.



ALESSANDRO POLITI  
*NDCF Director*



## POLITICAL SUMMARY

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The Balkan and the Black Sea region (BBS) is on the one hand under the evident effect of the Ukrainian war developments and on the other is under the influence of common and widespread internal factors. For the time being the military stalemate has underlined the substantial failure of Russian ambitions and the impossibility of a decisive victory over the invader. There are the elements for a suspension of hostilities and possibly a temporary arrangement, but the internal weakness of Moscow's and Kiev's governments makes it rather likely to wait for the November 2024 elections' outcome. Biden is clearly gearing up for the elections, subordinating any other issues to this crucial contest, while the EU cannot afford to sit and wait for a year because otherwise it will be bound hand and foot to US electoral results. If European countries do not recover their economic competitiveness, also through political decisions, they will be unable to finance their armed forces and to bankroll Kiev.

The EU has to make two decisions: the first is about the candidate status of Western Balkans and/or Ukraine/Moldova, the second about the future relationship with Russia and its energy supplies. The sooner the European Union acts, the more it shapes future developments, because the more the war drags on, the more organised crime and kleptocratic regimes will prosper. These phenomena are a common feature across the BBS region, coupled with a disastrous demography that nurtures fears of national extinction and against migrants.

Apparently, there will be no serious impulse to decide anything before the June 2024 European elections, that promise to be quite contested also between sectors of the public opinion supporting enlargement in different shades or supporting negotiations between Kiev and Moscow or a more robust European defence/NATO deterrence.

The conference showed that there are two conflict centres of gravity: the most obvious is the Ukraine-Russia war and the much less visible Bosnia-Herzegovina

disintegration risk. Ukraine moreover, while it is still facing its invader in a military stalemate, is also engaged in the fight against the internal danger of corruption. This phenomenon is continuously growing with the continuation of war, the increase of war weariness and it is fuelling an illegal economy that is the foundation of active transnational organised crime networks. Be the trafficking within Ukraine fully in the hand of local organised groups or managed in conjunction with Russian ones at certain segments, the fact is that the Ukrainian black economy is in any case part of a wider black globalisation.

These networks erode the country's political stability and trustworthiness, international credibility and the logistic rears security. What must be understood is that, like tariffs, trade barriers, sanctions in the legal economy, illegal trade is a geopolitical and geoeconomic tool in the ambit of illegal economy and in the hand of hostile and opportunistic adversaries.

Bosnia-Herzegovina is in the midst of one of the most serious political crises ever. NATO continues to project security and stability so the peoples and countries of this region can flourish, perfect, and improve their democracies and be part of the Euro-Atlantic community through the membership they aspire, without leaving behind those countries who do not aspire to NATO membership as well. But on the other hand, a joint and coordinated approach between the EU and NATO is needed so as to strengthening the country's defence and security capabilities through common initiatives, as the European Union Force (EUFOR) Althea, a typical Berlin+ success.

In addition to these two centres of gravity, Kosovo was another very serious crisis to the point that, instead of continuing to reduce the minimum presence of the international community (KFOR in first line), NATO called upon the strategic reserve forces (the first time in 23 years). The essential point to keep in mind is that enlargement should not be a cure for the present troubles, but the result of local political work to defuse local and regional tensions. In the meantime, the Alliance is undergoing its third transition phase: Cold War, collaboration, deterrence rebuilding after the invasion of Ukraine; this complicates the consensus on a more holistic approach towards the region. This new approach implies looking at the Black Sea in the perspective of its connectivity with Central Asia, the Balkans, the Mediterranean and the Red Sea.

In this context, one might believe that Montenegro should be a happy island, because already internationally recognised and full NATO member: in reality, it is one of the main and unrecognised fronts of Russian cyberwarfare against Western countries; attacks have even intensified during the last year. The same happens in Moldova, with the additional risk of minority manipulation in Gagauzia by foreign great powers.

During the debate two different sets of solutions emerged and they naturally are different for the two subregions of the Black Sea and the Balkans. For the first

subregion there are five elements fostering regional resilience and security:

1. Connectivity, i.e. ensuring connectivity between and within countries in the region, especially in a rather outdated land road and railroad network;
2. Freedom of navigation, especially by keeping the maritime routes free of mines;
3. Keeping strategic awareness over the entire Black Sea subregion because protracted “frozen conflicts” in Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia will hinder security in the whole of Europe;
4. Developing the domestic defence: meaning industries, inter-operability, and economies of scale. Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, and Ukraine are doing this, but this will have to take into account the EU/NATO framework not only for short term interoperability issues, but for longer term European standardisation needs;
5. Preserving and protecting the strategic communication role of the Danube River.

Regarding the Balkans a threefold strategy is useful: alignment with the EU economic policies; establishment of a secure legal framework in order to attract EU investments; and access to the European single market. The credibility of such integration process depends also on the EU effort in trying to solve the internal disputes among the Western Balkan countries, following a truly strategic and geopolitical approach. On the other hand, this new enlargement wave will necessitate a serious engagement by local political classes and voters in order to break the still persisting “stabilocracy” model.

**Alessandro Politi** is a global political and strategic analyst with 30 years of experience. Director since 12 years of the NATO Defense College Foundation. He teaches geopolitics and intelligence at the SIOI. He was senior researcher for the Italian MoD on Latin America, leading also the Global Outlook project. He has worked with four Defence Ministers, while consulting for other three major decision makers and several governmental bodies. He has published in various roles 50 books on strategic and security matters. Latest book: “Goodbye Merkel”. His last report “IHEDN, Pole Luxembourg, Quelles postures de l’Union Européenne, jeu d’échecs ou jeu de rôles, vis-à-vis de l’Alliance du Traité de l’Atlantique Nord ?”. Most recent podcast: “NATO and China in the Global Disorder”, achieving 10.000 listeners in one week.

What strategies should be implemented towards the Balkan and Black Sea region?

How to reinforce the cooperation between NATO and other international actors?



# SESSION I PREVENTION AND CONSOLIDATION

October 2023. Turkish Major General Özkan Ulutaş  
takes command of KFOR mission.

## CHAIR



ALEXANDRA VON NAHMEN

*Chief, Brussels Bureau,  
Deutsche Welle, Brussels*

**Alexandra von Nahmen** is Deutsche Welle Brussels bureau Chief. Prior to her current position, she covered the White House during Donald Trump's presidency. She was a member of the White House Press Corps and the president of the White House Foreign Press Group. During her career, she also led the DW reporters' team and worked as Deutsche Welle's Senior security correspondent. In that capacity, she reported on the fight against the Islamic State in Northern Iraq and Tunisia and on NATO's Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan. She also worked for CNN in Washington DC.



***NATO is currently facing a number of challenges in the Balkans and in the Black Sea region: What kind of approach does the Alliance need to meet them? Which synergies in both regions can be obtained?***



TACAN ILDEM

*Chairman, Centre for Economics and Foreign  
Policy Studies (EDAM), Istanbul*

## THE BLACK SEA-BALKAN STRATEGIC LINK: PATHS TO SECURITY AND STABILISATION

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I will be dwelling mostly on Black Sea security, starting with the widely shared perception that from 2014 onwards, while boosting its deterrence and defence capabilities, NATO's main focus was on the Baltics, while now both the NATO's Strategic Concept and the EU Strategic Compass for Security and Defence (EEAS) also refer to the Black Sea as a strategic region. The Black Sea, including in its broader context, has become more contested at a time when global strategic competition is gaining traction among major powers.

The ongoing war in Ukraine unfortunately brought a dramatic change to the already challenging and complex security environment in the region, but we need to recognise the fact that profound changes already occurred in 2014 and even before.

In 2014, with the annexation of Crimea and the militarisation of the Crimean Peninsula, Russia created the anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities to provide a protective umbrella for Russian Armed Forces, covering a significant portion of the Black Sea region. Russia used the Black Sea as a platform to project power in the Mediterranean Sea basin. Thereby, by building bridgeheads in the Middle East and North Africa, Russia attempted to flank Europe also from the south.

The Alliance should adopt a more comprehensive approach towards the region, paying attention to different regions and their geographical continuum: this means looking at the Black Sea not only in an isolated way, but in keeping with the notion of 360-degree approach and the indivisibility of security the Black Sea, the Caucasus, the Caspian Sea, the Balkans and Mediterranean Sea regions need to be considered in a connected and holistic way in a geographical entirety.

In the past it is clear that Russia implemented a strategic and calculated approach towards the Black Sea, especially towards Georgia and Ukraine, while NATO's

efforts were sporadic and somewhat ambiguous. In the past some Allied nations remained focussed basically on enhanced NATO presence in the maritime domain. What should be done is to take a comprehensive approach here too that looks at the land, maritime, air and cyber domains from strategic and multi-domain perspective.

Another point to be highlighted is the existence of protracted conflicts in the region: Russia has exploited these protracted conflicts to provide itself with buffer zones and with strategic *rooms of manoeuvre*, and this is something that needs to be taken into consideration while developing an Alliance approach towards the Black Sea region.

In any discussion related to international security upholding the rules based international order and ensuring respect to international law is of critical importance. In that context from time to time we come across some observations regarding the obsolete nature of Montreux Convention which stays as an obstacle in NATO's efforts to boost deterrence and defence for the Black Sea region. Such observations are totally unfounded. The Montreux Convention is an inseparable part of international law that regulates the passage of warships through the Turkish Straits and any suggestion not to implement its provisions would lead to mimicking the acts of those who violate international law. Türkiye, acting as the custodian of this Convention, has been implementing its provisions meticulously since before World War II, thereby not allowing any escalation in the Black Sea region. Montreux Convention should not therefore be seen as an impediment in enhancing deterrence and defence but rather a security and stability multiplier.

The current circumstances do not allow the notion of "regional ownership", that Türkiye has always been supportive of, to be effective with its original meaning and scope. At this moment bolstering cooperation among the three riparian NATO Allies, Türkiye, Bulgaria and Romania, will transform the original regional ownership ideal to a more realistic endeavour. This cooperation shall include consultations at all levels, joint exercises, cooperation in capacity building and more. Drifting naval mines pose a significant risk for ships and critical infrastructure located in the Black Sea. The recent Mine Counter Measures Task Group created among the three littoral Allies constitutes a vivid example to such cooperation.

Türkiye's advanced military industry represents an opportunity for expanding the trilateral cooperation and establishing joint ventures for instance in the fields of anti-ship missiles and unmanned vehicles, bolstering NATO coastal defence in the Black Sea. Involvement of the littoral Allies in multinational initiatives to develop capabilities based on EDTs, AI, robotics and NATO support in this regard would be of great importance.

In conclusion, I need to emphasise that the volatile and unpredictable security environment in the Black Sea region, which combines armed conflict in Ukraine,



existing protracted conflicts, environmental degradation, aggressive pattern of behaviour not only by use of force but also of hybrid tools, violation of the principles of freedom of navigation, attacks on civilian critical infrastructure, requires a strategic thinking in developing the right approach while not ignoring the importance of risk and escalation management in such a reflection.

Ambassador **Tacan Ildem** is Chairman of the Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM), an Istanbul based independent think tank. Member of NATO Experts Group, who presented a report entitled “NATO 2030: United for a New Era”, is a senior Turkish diplomat. Since the start of his long career in 1978 till February 2021 he held bilateral and multilateral positions including NATO Assistant Secretary General between 2016 to 2020. He served as the Turkish Ambassador to the Netherlands and Permanent Representative to NATO and the OSCE. He also served as Director General for International Security Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Chief of Cabinet, Principal Foreign Policy Advisor and Spokesperson of the President of the Republic. His postings abroad also include those at the Embassies in Washington DC, Athens and New Delhi. Ambassador Ildem is a graduate of Ankara University Faculty of Political Science. He is a recipient of the decoration of Grand Officer of the Order of the Star of Italian Solidarity and the Medal of Gratitude of Albania.



OLAV REINERTSEN

*Ambassador of Norway to Bosnia and Herzegovina;  
and NATO Contact Point Embassy in BiH, Sarajevo*



## CLOSING THE GAP IN THE WESTERN BALKANS: BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AS A CASE STUDY

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As the Norwegian Ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) for three years and a half, I have been working with the Balkan and Black Sea region for fifteen years, with my embassy becoming the NATO Contact Point Embassy (CPE) for about a year now.<sup>1</sup> The core of CPEs' activities is public diplomacy: it is about disseminating information to the public, displaying what NATO is, its values, what we do share as Allies, the thirty-one (almost thirty-two) of us. But it is also about counter disinformation and malign influence and being a CPE Ambassador in BiH is a great responsibility, which is both a blessing and a curse.

The political crisis in BiH is serious. The economic situation is in a deep need of improvement, in addition to a unique demographic crisis: as an example, over 100.000 people left this beautiful country last year. Experts fear that the trend will continue.

Despite the fact that BiH received the EU candidate status in December 2022 and that the EU recently called on the adaptation of reforms for accession negotiations, little progress has been made. In early November, the European Union Force (EUFOR) Althea was extended for another year. This is a mission developed within the framework of the executive mandate to ensure a safe and secure environment. However, negotiations around the extension of this mandate are always complicated, given the veto power of some actors within the Security Council. The Allies must support EUFOR Althea and it needs to be reinforced, due to its lack of mobility and presence. We should all publicly convey that NATO is very proud of EUFOR Althea, since this is the only mission that actually came out of the so-called Berlin

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<sup>1</sup> The Royal Norwegian Embassy in Sarajevo.

Plus Agreement.<sup>2</sup>

Regarding BiH and NATO, in the light of the complex geopolitical situation and the Russian aggression in Ukraine, BiH was identified at the NATO Madrid Summit (2022) as one of the three most vulnerable countries, in addition to Moldova and Georgia. As a result, a Defence Capacity Building (DCB) package was adopted to strengthen BiH's defence and security capabilities. Although the package was endorsed in February 2023, it is not yet operational. Contributions are still being accepted, and the process is very slow, but it needs to be as robust and quick as possible due to the increased interest in Bosnia and Herzegovina from the Alliance.

On the positive side, research conducted by my embassy, together with one of our partners, found that two-thirds of the population in Bosnia and Herzegovina is in favour of NATO membership including one third belonging to the Republika Srpska, which is a very positive and encouraging fact.

As International Community, as Allies, it is not merely about NATO's cooperation with just another Partnership for Peace country, because the stakes are much higher. It was the international community that actually crafted the BiH Constitution, but we can say that BiH still is an international protectorate. Twenty-eight years after the war, BiH is strongly reliant and (I would dare to say addicted) to its international partners' help.

My country, Norway, has always pursued an impartial and balanced policy but it is not always easy to find a common ground given the completely diverging policies of the three main ethnic groups of the country. Furthermore, consensus among the Western part of the international community is not easy to reach. It is important to remember that nearly all progress in BiH, and in most of the Western Balkan region, is a direct result of the International Community's pressure. We shall therefore work to curb these issues and, in order to do so, a joint and coordinated approach is necessary, together with a united stance of the European Union and NATO.

To conclude, the Western Balkan region is vital for the security of Europe. Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Western Balkans should be given the highest priority, implementing the ways to assist and adopt appropriate packages to support them politically and financially.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004\\_2009/documents/dv/berlinplus\\_/berlinplus\\_en.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/dv/berlinplus_/berlinplus_en.pdf).

Ambassador **Olav Reinertsen** is Norway's Ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ambassador Reinertsen presented his credentials to the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Sefik Dzaferovic, on 29 July 2020. Ambassador Reinertsen started his professional career at the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1993 and has served as diplomat at several postings abroad, including Dublin, Strasbourg and Brussels. He has good knowledge of the region from his previous experience. For four years he was Head of the Secretariat for the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF) at DG Enlargement at the European Commission in Brussels. He has also experience in the private sector, amongst other as Project Director at the Norwegian telecom-provider, Telenor.



LARIS GAISER

*former Political Advisor, Kosovo Force (KFOR),  
NATO, Ljubljana*



## NATO'S ROLE IN THE WIDER BALKANS

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During my mandate as the Political Advisor for Kosovo Force (KFOR) from October 2022 to October 2023, I experienced what I would probably define the worst KFOR mission in the last 20 years. The situation in the Balkans has deeply worsened. We are talking about a region where frozen conflicts are melting down. In this context, NATO plays an increasingly important role, representing, in my opinion, the *primus inter pares* partner in the region, together with the European Union (EU) and the other institutions. Actually, the coordinated approach implemented by NATO and the EU in the last year is without precedent. But how have the EU and NATO finally found a common path, a common goal, while pushed by the same threats?

From last October onwards, Kosovo has experienced a continuous crisis management, involving a number of issues such as: license plates issues in November 2023; Kosovo Serbs erecting barricades on the main roads in northern Kosovo and withdrawing from Pristina's institutions; and an overall judicial system not efficiently working in the North of the country, with all its consequences on the whole political stage. A condition further exacerbated by recent events, such as the clash in May 2023, where KFOR answered trying to maintain impartiality (even though NATO KFOR soldiers were wounded), or the events in September 2023 near Banjska<sup>1</sup>, and so on.

This period is clearly showing that all the perspectives and assumptions we used to build up, i.e., our strategies, are completely in vain. Using NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg's words, during the last meeting with the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, "we have a lot of work to do in the Western Balkans". What NATO Secretary General did in the last months was indeed calling upon the

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<sup>1</sup> On the 24<sup>th</sup> of September 2023, a violent attack was launched against Kosovo Police in the north of the country, near the Banjska Monastery, Kosovo.

strategic reserve forces.

If in the past, and specifically in the last 23 years, the overall purpose was reaching a *minimum* presence of the international community in this region, today the situation has changed. All the international community forces (NATO forces, KFOR forces, United Nations, and European Union forces) must maximise their efforts, because we need to contain the current situation in the region.

There is no military presence, the region is neither resilient nor self-sufficient. On the contrary, it is only driven by egoistic agendas, ignoring EU and NATO's future and only considering short-term objectives, with consequent clashes. But why are they doing that?

I was born in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and then I grew up in Italy, serving this country as a diplomat. Being born in Yugoslavia, in a very decadent period, I am a pessimist but, luckily, I am Italian in part, which represents my optimistic side. Putting together both my Yugoslavian and Italian sides, I consider myself a realist. In the end, my realism suggests that we need to further join our forces, as we did during last year, to establish a real and concrete strategy for the future.

On their side, countries in this region should fight for their own path towards NATO and EU integration. Rather, they are creating further tensions to push us in "the trap" according to which the EU enlargement is the only way to contain the current situation. But this is not the right approach in the international environment: these countries must comply with their duties and implement their efforts in becoming more resilient, in order to be admitted in the Euro-Atlantic community.



From 2022 to 2023, Dr **Laris Gaiser** was Chief Political Advisor for Kosovo Force (KFOR), the NATO Mission in Kosovo. Dr Gaiser is currently Member of ITSTIME (Italian Team for Security, Terroristic Issues and Managing Emergencies) in Milan, Visiting Professor at Società Italiana per le Organizzazioni Internazionali (SIOI) and at University of Firenze, as well as Visiting 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 Dr Gaiser as member of his Strategic Council. Several times he has been appointed as Adviser of Foreign Governments as well as Board Member of private owned companies.





ALINA INAYEH

*Senior Fellow, German Marshall Fund  
of the United States, Bucharest*

## AN ECONOMIC AND SECURITY STRATEGY FOR THE BLACK SEA

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The efforts of NATO towards the Black Sea region continue to be sporadic, but the Alliance is not the only one to lack an efficient strategy. Despite the ongoing war in Europe, efforts by the international community, the United States (US), as well as the European Union (EU) remain modest and inadequate. Nevertheless, increased attention has been given to the region, especially regarding its security. On this basis, several actors started to introduce or develop a security strategy: not only the US with the Black Sea Security Act<sup>1</sup>, but also France, Italy, and Germany, where debates are held in the Bundestag.

There is therefore a general consensus that a comprehensive approach to the region is necessary. In this sense, security has a broader meaning: it not only involves the military sphere, but also economic, resilient and societal security. Unfortunately, none of the four strategies previously mentioned (those of US, France, Italy and Germany) is actually being adopted or implemented.

In my opinion, the most important five elements that may enhance regional resilience and security, addressing both its economic and military security spheres, while focussing on the littoral States (including both member states and NATO partners) are:

Connectivity: ensuring connectivity between and within countries in the region. This was proven for instance by the urgent need to send both military and economic aid to Ukraine, as well as disengage from Ukraine in other cases, but also by having border crossing's function and poor connection among logistics hubs (in Poland, in Romania, in Bulgaria, in Ukraine and so on) and transportation routes. This is important not only for economic resilience but also for military mobility, which is extremely low in the region. Concerning cereal security, for instance, military

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/804/text>.

mobility must be urgently addressed and reinforced.

Ensuring freedom of navigation. The maritime security of the Black Sea's basin has not been taken seriously until now, despite the Black Sea being a theatre of war. As long as navigation freedom is not guaranteed and secured, with Russian mines threatening the commercial ships (including in the territorial waters of Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey), then we cannot talk about economic resilience. And this is the reason why the collaboration between Turkey, Romania, and Bulgaria on demining the sea is so crucial.

When it comes to the security of the region, it is vital to consider the entire Black Sea region. We tend indeed to focus on the littoral member states (Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey) considering their land and air defence, and territorial waters, while ignoring Georgia or Moldova. But is important to bear in mind that until these countries, as well as Ukraine, will not be safe, security of the Black Sea cannot be attained. Besides, the protracted conflicts in Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia are further hindering the security of the region.

Developing the domestic defence: meaning industries, inter-operability, and economies of scale. Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, and Ukraine are currently developing their domestic defence industries. The cooperation among these countries, especially when it comes to procurement process or production, has the potential to create attractive economies of scale and to accelerate the success of their industries [Ed. taking into account also an EU/NATO framework].

Last, but not least - and this is probably the most important point - is the role of the Danube River. Its strategic position is extremely important from both the economic and security perspectives. Reinforcing security in the Danube's mouth could actually enhance the land safety of both Ukraine and Romania. This is a crucial strategic point, that should not be ignored by NATO or the US in creating their strategies towards the region.

**Alina Inayeh** is Senior Fellow at the German Marshall Fund (GMF) of the United States, based in Bucharest. She joined GMF in 2007 as the director of the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation, a project dedicated to strengthening cooperation and fostering development in the Black Sea region. She is an active practitioner in the field of international development and democratization, having run the Freedom House office in Ukraine in 2004 and the NDI office in Russia in 2000-2003, with a focus on civic education and political processes. She has trained NGOs throughout Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union on issues related to NGO development and democratization. She was a leading civic activist in the 1990s in Romania and an active promoter of the NGO sector in the country. Ms Inayeh received her Bachelor's degree in geology from the University of Bucharest and a master's in public policy from the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University. She is fluent in English and Russian in addition to her native Romanian.

How can be tackled  
cyber security  
threats while  
maximising  
the economic viability  
of Ukraine?

What instruments to  
restore a safe IT  
and business  
environment?

An aerial photograph of a large cargo ship docked at a port. The ship's deck is filled with large, rectangular grain silos, some of which are being filled with a golden-brown substance, likely grain. Several cranes are positioned along the ship's length, and a conveyor system is visible on the right side. On the shore, several yellow trucks are parked, and a large crane is visible. The water is a deep blue-green color, and the sky is clear.

# SESSION II TOWARDS A VIABLE CYBER AND BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Loading a cargo ship with Ukrainian grain in an Ukrainian port.

## CHAIR



GABRIELE CARRER

*Journalist, Formiche, Rome*

**Gabriele Carrer** is a professional Italian journalist contributing to Formiche, specialised in foreign policy and national security. He also hosts and authors OOPodcast, an intelligence-themed podcast produced in collaboration with Intesa Sanpaolo. Mr Carrer's articles, covering Italy in English, are featured on Decode39, a spin-off of Formiche. He is a regular contributor to HuffPost Italia. He previously worked as a visiting fellow at the Rome office of the European Council on Foreign Relations, carrying out research on foreign disinformation and interference threats in Italy.



*After Covid-19 and the Russian aggression of Ukraine, the cyberspace has been increasingly affected by cyber espionage and cyber-attacks. What are the means to restore a safe IT and business environment?*



GALINA YANCHENKO

*Member, Committee on Economic Development,  
Parliament, Kiev*



## THE TRANSNATIONAL FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION AND ORGANISED CRIME

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Several factors influence the current situation in Ukraine, regarding its overall economic development and State reforms, especially when referring to anti-corruption politics. Since the election of Volodymyr Zelensky as President in 2019, an additional component to curb corruption was established in Ukraine. In addition to anti-corruption infrastructures, already built by the previous President Viktor Yanukovich, we have added a significant prevention component, that includes the digitalisation of the state services and the implementation of communication and cooperation tools with citizens and businesses.

In 2019, a state mobile application named “Diia” was developed, and then launched in 2020.<sup>1</sup> This app serves to implement the communication and cooperation between the state and its citizens, as well as businesses. Moreover, most of personal documents, personal ID of citizens, are now available online on their smartphones, giving the opportunity to decrease corruption risks. This is one of the positive factors that influence the overall situation with anti-corruption politics.

A second factor that positively affects the situation in Ukraine is the overall society’s attitude. Starting from the full-scale invasion of Russia, many citizens have started to participate in several activities. They have joined the army or started to volunteer, putting at risk their lives to help other civilians evacuating from dangerously bombarded regions. When citizens start to participate in a proactive way, when basically citizens contribute to the state activities (and in some cases even replace the state body) their awareness and responsibility grows tremendously. According to a recent public opinion poll, a significant shift in public attitude has

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ukraine.ua/invest-trade/digitalization/>.

been noticed. For instance, before the Russian invasion, 40% of Ukrainians were absolutely against being engaged in corruption activities, while now (after a year and a half since the full-scale invasion) this number grew to 60%, representing an enormous shift in public opinion and public attitude over a relatively short period of time.

However, challenges still persist. One of these is the load on law enforcement bodies and, generally, state bodies. Due to the invasion many people, who used to work in police, the border guard or other law enforcement agencies, had to or volunteered to join the army, protecting our country on the front line. Despite our acknowledgement and appreciation, we need to take into account that ineffectiveness of law enforcement agencies is growing while failing in their duties, including the one to identify crimes like corruption or illegal activities on the borders.

**Galina Yanchenko** is a Ukrainian Member of Parliament and holds a position of the Secretary in the National Investment Council and advisory body to the President of Ukraine. In the Parliament, she is the Member of the Committee on Economic Development. In addition, Ms Yanchenko chairs the Temporary Special Commission of the Verkhovna Rada on protection investors' rights. Prior to being elected to Verkhovna Rada, she led the Civil Oversight Council at the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine and was a member of the Kyiv City Council.

MARKO BANOVIĆ  
*Analyst, Digital Forensic Center,  
Podgorica*



## THE CYBERSECURITY STRATEGIC PICTURE FROM THE ADRIATIC TO THE BLACK SEA

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The Western Balkans region is quite important for the big powers. Unfortunately, the internal issues in the region created a fertile ground for the malign foreign influence and for cyber-attacks, seriously undermining the cyber security of the region. Cyber-attacks and disinformation campaigns are not only targeting Western Balkans but also the Alliance, together with the European Union (EU) and the Euro-Atlantic community. The destabilisation of the Western Balkans means a major destabilisation within the Euro-Atlantic community.

Issues such as organised crime, weak institutions, huge polarisation within societies, far-right nationalism, are exploited by bad actors to further destabilise the region, undermining the democratic development of the region and its inclusion within the EU and NATO.

A good example in this respect is Montenegro. Montenegro is a member of NATO, and it is perceived as the next candidate for the EU enlargement as well. When Montenegro joined NATO in 2017, high expectations were given to the security of the whole region, but nowadays the country has been targeted by cyber-attacks, even more after it joined the Alliance. This fact clearly demonstrates that foreign actors are trying to undermine the country, as well as the Alliance, threatening their cyber security.

In addition to state institutions, cyber-attacks also target individual citizens, media, businesses, and civil organisations. The Digital Forensic Center has been targeted too: during the Covid-19 pandemic we discovered a botnet<sup>1</sup> on Twitter

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<sup>1</sup> A botnet (short for “robot network”) is a network of computers infected by malware that are under control of a single attacking party, known as the “bot-herder”.

(today's X), connected with the ruling party in Serbia and the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade. The botnet was promoting the three narratives according to which China is the biggest partner of Serbian government, that China provided most of help during Covid-19, and finally that the EU did not contribute to the relief of Covid-19 pandemic. It was the first time that something like that happened in the region, and it went viral. We therefore suffered a series of Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDoS) cyber-attacks trying to take down our website, so that our perspective of the story could not be shared.

Today, we need to give more attention to this contemporary threat. The region is quite vulnerable for both cyber-attacks and disinformation, and it is essential to be abreast to the evolvement of further cyber security threats, the 5G technology first of all. The equipment for 5G technology was not accurately installed within the Western Balkan countries and is not completely safe. In addition to that, we did not align with our partners' policies, neither the Alliance nor the EU, when it comes to 5G technology.

The second issue is the development of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI). This is probably the most recent challenge threatening our security, but, on the positive side, when it comes to generative AI the whole world is starting from the same point. It is important for the region to keep track with time and to follow both the EU and Alliance policies when it comes to AI. This is of key importance since AI is increasing the ability of malign actors to both disseminate information and augmenting the ability of cyber threats. This does not involve only state actors: with the AI, even individuals can produce massive disinformation campaigns, as demonstrated by the state-sponsored disinformation campaign in the United States coming from Russia or during Brexit in UK.

**Marko Banović** is an Analyst at the Digital Forensic Center (DFC) which is the first digital hub of its kind founded by the Atlantic Council of Montenegro. The work of the DFC is focussed on countering disinformation, fake news and propaganda campaigns which are aiming to destabilise democratic process in both Montenegro and wider Western Balkan region. Mr Banović is specialised in researching and combating malign foreign influence with the main focus on online media outlets and social media. Since 2020, Mr Banović have been doing briefings, workshops and trainings on disinformation, media and digital literacy in Montenegro. In 2019 he graduated at University of Westminster in London.

OKSANA SHVETS

*Chief Policy Officer, American Chamber of Commerce in Ukraine, Kyiv*



## RESTORING A VIABLE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

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The American Chamber of Commerce in Ukraine (AmCham Ukraine) is the largest in Europe, with a 40 people full-time staff and with 75% of our staff currently working in Kyiv. AmCham Ukraine managed to deliver the best services under the attacks of missiles (cruise, ballistic, hypersonic) and kamikaze drones. Daily policy priorities, which turned into wartime challenges, involve security and defence, demining, conscription of employees, grain corridor transport, queues at Ukraine's borders, war risks' insurance, cyber security, data migration and many others. Ukraine is resilient: its citizens fight for their freedom and their economic recovery.

Since the beginning of the full-scale war, 148 new members joined AmCham Ukraine reinforcing our business field and adopting further policies to face our security, geopolitical and economic challenges.

Our businesses continue to create jobs, invest, rebuild communities, support the humanitarian drive and deliver essential modern services, to help people during wartime.

In September, AmCham Ukraine, jointly with AmCham member company Citi Ukraine, conducted the survey "Doing Business in Wartime Ukraine", aiming at assessing the state of business in Ukraine after one year and a half since Russia's invasion.<sup>1</sup> According to the survey:

- 84% of members are fully operational after one year and a half of Russia's full-scale war in Ukraine;
- 91% of our members affirmed that safety and security of staff is the number one challenge for their companies with regard to doing business over the next six

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<sup>1</sup> <https://chamber.ua/news/84-of-companies-are-fully-operational-after-1-5-years-of-russia-s-full-scale-war-in-ukraine-new-survey-by-the-american-chamber-of-commerce-in-ukraine-and-citi-ukraine/>

months;

- 72% of business representatives give an upbeat forecast on their company's financial health at the end of 2023;
- 45% will achieve planned financial results;
- 27% will even achieve more than was planned.

Moreover, according to the survey results, the biggest opportunities to attract foreign direct investment to Ukraine in 2023 and beyond, include the following spheres: security and defence; infrastructure and construction; IT technologies; agriculture; energy and renewables; high-tech production. Even though investment in Ukraine may be risky, not investing is even riskier. We have many examples of companies that successfully operate in-between air raid sirens or resumed operations in Ukraine's regions and building shelters across. Again, this is both a risk and a reward model, but the rule of law is crucial for our companies.

AmCham Ukraine has developed a very detailed strategic document which contains 10 priorities for Ukraine's post-war economic recovery, among those: fostering countrywide digitalisation and IT ecosystem growth, secure investment, property rights, level playing field and proper intellectual property rights (IPR) enforcement.

It is time to look at Ukraine, because the biggest recovery of a nation in Europe since World War II has already begun. Ukraine is a big country, with a large population and an excellent workforce on the border of the EU, with EU membership on track. A country that has turned away from Russia and is clearly facing the West, a country that is worth visiting.

With concern to the challenges that members of the business community are currently facing in Ukraine, I would mention that in 2019 a Solid Excisable Goods Task Force was established by AmCham Ukraine, setting among its priorities the fight of illegal trade, which has caused huge State Budget losses in Ukraine. According to KANTAR Ukraine research done in June 2023, the share of illegal tobacco products in the total market volume in Ukraine accounts for almost 20%. Moreover, it is calculated that, in 2023, the tax revenue losses to the State Budget of Ukraine coming from the illegal tobacco market are estimated at more than 570 million dollars. Given these circumstances it is essential for our government and law enforcement agencies to join the efforts and intensify this fight against illegal markets.

Finally, it is important to mention cyber security. Since 2022, a new wave of Ukraine-Russia cyber war started and AmCham Ukraine has been targeted through massive amount of phishing and malware attacks (about 40.000 per month). Our website is also a desired goal for hackers: we registered an average of 28.500

monthly attempts to break our website server security, meaning almost 1.000 attempts per day. Even if we aren't from the government sector (a top target for Russian hackers), we still represent some value for them, probably because we have an extensive database with contacts from many different companies worldwide. We have a lot of work to do, but we firmly believe in the support and cooperation to tackle these issues.

**Oksana Shvets** is Chief Policy Officer (Tax & Customs Issues) for the American Chamber of Commerce in Ukraine since 2023, after leading the Tax and Customs Committees since 2017 for the same association. AmCham Ukraine is leading international business association that has been serving 600+ members in Ukraine since 1992, representing the shared voice of best-in-class US, international, and Ukrainian companies, who invested over \$50 billion in Ukraine and remain committed to the country. AmCham Ukraine is an affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and an integral part of the global AmChams in Europe network, helping companies grow and promote their services and brands. There are 24 committees within the AmCham Ukraine, representing all key sectors of the economy and ensuring constant dialogue with public authorities, promoting the business agenda. In 2014 she obtained the Master's degree in translation at the Kyiv National Linguistic University. In 2023 Oksana completed the Experimental Learning Program in Strategic Negotiation at the American University in Kyiv.

What perspectives  
for the integration  
pathway towards  
the Euro-Atlantic  
community?

How to develop a  
resilience recovery  
approach  
in the region?





SESSION III  
RESTORING  
REGIONAL  
RESILIENCE

Градска библиотека Суботина  
Szabadkai Árosi Könyvtár  
Grad sa knjižnica Subotica

City library building in Subotica, Serbia.

## CHAIR



SOLOMON PASSY

*former Foreign Minister and Signatory to NATO and EU Accession Treaties of Bulgaria; and President, Atlantic Club, Sofia*

Dr **Solomon Passy** is a Bulgarian scientist, statesman and innovator with a significant career in a variety of fields. As an MP in the Grand National Assembly in August 1990 Dr Passy made the first in Europe officially recorded appeal for NATO's enlargement eastwards with simultaneous dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and co-drafted a bill for Bulgaria's membership in the EU. A decade later, as Minister of Foreign Affairs (2001–2005), he negotiated and signed Bulgaria's Accession to both, NATO and the EU. He held also a number of institutional and international posts, including: Chairman of the UN Security Council (2002–2003); OSCE Chairman in Office (2004); twice Chairman of Parliamentary Defence and Foreign Affairs Committees and MP (1990–1991, 2001–2005, 2005–2009).

**EU** *EU and NATO membership could reinforce the security of the region and limit Russian infiltrations. What are the future perspectives for those countries where internal disputes and separatist sentiment continue to brew?*



ZORAN JOLEVSKI

*Vice Rector for International Cooperation, European University; and former Minister of Defence, Republic of North Macedonia, Skopje*

## THE BALKANS AND THE BLACK SEA: IS IT POSSIBLE AN OVERALL APPROACH ENHANCED ECONOMIC INTEGRATION WITH EU?

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The current geopolitical situation indicates the necessity to change business as usual when it comes to EU integration of Southeastern Europe (SEE).<sup>1</sup> Countries that joined the EU in the previous two major waves of enlargement, so called Big Bang Enlargement, needed 10 years from the application to full membership (except for Romania and Bulgaria, which took 12 years). The accession process has a much slower path for the SEE countries. For example, almost 20 years have passed since the application of N. Macedonia and it has not yet started negotiations, and 14 years have passed since Albania's application. Montenegro and Serbia, that submitted applications in 2008 and 2009 respectively, and began with negotiations in 2012 and 2013, are still far from becoming members of the EU.

The war in Ukraine revealed the strategic need for the integration of SEE in the Euro-Atlantic structures. As a result of the geostrategic upheavals the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen speaking at the GLOBSEC in Bratislava on the 31<sup>st</sup> of May 2023, stated that the EU will have a new approach on the accession of the Western Balkans and indicated that EU will “offer to the Western Balkans some of the advantages of membership in advance”.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The EU political circles refer to this region as the Western Balkans, but I will use the term Southeast Europe for two reasons. The words Balkan or Balkanization often have a negative connotation. The second reason is to stress that we are talking about the countries that are geographically belonging to the European continent.

<sup>2</sup> Keynote speech by President von der Leyen at the GLOBSEC 2023 Bratislava Forum,

In November 2023, the European Commission adopted the “New growth plan for Western Balkans”<sup>3</sup> that is very similar to a project I worked on between 2021 and 2022 at Harvard University, titled “Comprehensive Strategy for enhancing economic integration of South Eastern Europe into European Economic Area”. The New growth plan for the Western Balkans is a great opportunity and it is a good step towards strengthening the regional and European integration of SEE. It is based on four pillars:

- Enhancing economic integration with the European Union’s single market, through aligning with single market rules and opening the relevant sectors;
- Boosting economic integration within the Western Balkans through the Common Regional Markets, based on EU rules and standards;
- Accelerating fundamental reforms;
- Increasing financial assistance to support the reforms through a Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans.

The first element of the EU New economic growth plan for Western Balkans and of my Comprehensive Strategy is integration of the region in the Single Market. Is the vision for Southeastern European countries becoming part of the Single Market in 5 years (by the end of 2028) achievable? I believe yes, but the hard work on reforms in SEE countries and commitment of the EU is required.

The New economic growth plan for Western Balkans envisages 7 priority actions for integration into the EU’s single market and my Comprehensive strategy recommends full integration in the Single market. The successful implementation of the 7 priority Actions will allow SEE countries not only to improve the competitiveness of the national economies but will also open the opportunity to seek deeper inclusion in the Single Market.

The SEE countries should immediately establish teams that will be in charge of utilizing the opportunities provided by the plan. It is crucial immediately to prepare the Blueprint of the administrative structure for implementation of the opportunities provided in the New growth plan. It is necessary for implementation of each of 7 priorities to be established as a working group. They need to prepare an Action Plan, identify national gaps and priorities and identify actors in charge of implementation. The Action plans should be adopted by the governments and become part of their programme. Although a significant part of the activities needs to be undertaken at

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31.5.2023.

<sup>3</sup> European Commission, Communication to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: New growth plan for the Western Balkans. Brussels, COM(2023) 691 final 8.11.2023.

the expert level, it is necessary that their work be directly monitored by the highest leadership of the SEE countries. For example, governments should hold thematic sessions once a month with all stakeholders, to monitor progress, mark obstacles and overcoming bureaucratic delays.

The successful implementation of the plan by SEE countries will not only enable their accelerated integration into the Single Market and improve the competitiveness of their national economies but will provide arguments and enable them to request full integration into the Single Market.

All the involved countries must seriously commit to the implementation of the EU *acquis*, while integration mechanisms should stress the importance of concrete activities. Thus, the annual meetings at the highest level, in the framework of the Berlin process, are an important instrument for dialogue between the EU member states, the European Commission and the SEE countries.

It is necessary to develop a 5-year plan for the full implementation of the *acquis* relevant to the Single Market and this will send a strong signal to SEE countries that the enlargement process is bringing tangible results. At the same time this process is without prejudice to the single ongoing accession processes and the specific conditions set out, in particular as regards the fundamentals.

In addition to the political dimension, it is necessary to establish a mechanism at technical level to get the technical expertise for adopting of the Single Market regulation. Without expertise from the EU member states and from the European Commission, it will be very difficult for SEE countries to adopt and implement the *acquis* of the Single Market.

The formation of the Regional common market is extremely important. Considering the current geopolitical situation, that requires an accelerated integration of the region into the EU, it is necessary to make additional efforts to combine activities for the full integration of the region into the Single Market with the necessary actions related to the establishment of the Common Regional Market. It is quite an extensive task, but it may pass the strong message that this market is not a dead end or a goal in itself, but a necessary towards full EU integration.

In order to advance in the establishment of Regional Common Market, the SEE countries could hold meetings twice a year at the highest level to discuss the advancement of this process. The purpose of the meetings should be to give directions for future integration steps and about the progress achieved. The introduction of a 6-month rotating presidency might be considered.

Another important element is the full alignment of the SEE countries with the current EU economic policies, notably the green and digital transition, investments in research and development; the catch up with this transition is necessary by strengthening the absorption capabilities.

The third element of my Comprehensive Strategy for Enhancing economic integration of SEE into the European Economic Area is impact investments. The New growth plan for the Western Balkans points out that it is essential for candidate countries to attract private investment and to accelerate fundamental reforms that “will also have a positive impact on the pace at which countries move along their EU accession path”<sup>4</sup>.

The concept of impact investments refers to private sector involvement in solving certain social goals through investments that will also aim to achieve a certain profit. For this type of investment, not only the profit rate is significant, but also the social goals to be achieved.

European companies are investing in SEE, but they need support because the social impact of these investments will assist in reducing the gap. The impact investments could be in the form of FDI, Public-Private Partnership or other models. In addition to the assets of the companies, the source of funding could come from pension funds and other institutional investors.

To achieve this, it is necessary for countries from the SEE to adopt an appropriate legal environment, that includes rule of law, good governance and institutions that will provide strong guarantees for the investments of the EU private sector. Those fundamentals are part of the New growth plan for the Western Balkans (third pillar). The countries of SEE should create a business-friendly environment that will be attractive for the impact investors. A set of guidance and processes should be adopted to enable EU pension and other institutional investment funds to provide funding for impact investments in the SEE. The Western Balkans Guarantee Facility could facilitate the impact investments.

The opportunities for inclusion of the SEE private sector in the global supply chains of the EU companies should be identified, especially after COVID-19 experiences that indicated the need for geographic diversification. Relocation of production facilities that are geographically distant from Europe to SEE will contribute to reduction of the risks of EU’s global value chains and promote the development of SEE.

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<sup>4</sup> European Commission, *ibid.*, “New growth plan for the Western Balkans”. Brussels, COM(2023) 691 final 8.11.2023.

Ambassador **Zoran Jolevski** is former FYROM's Minister of Defence, Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, Skopje. He also served as an ambassador to the United States from March 2007 until June 2014. In 2022 he was Advanced Leadership Initiative Fellow at Harvard University. Ambassador Jolevski is the Founder and President of the Institute for Strategic Initiatives and Policies. From 1988 to 1999, he worked in various capacities in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. From 2000 to 2004, Ambassador Jolevski was Chief of Staff to the late President Boris Trajkovski and served as the Chief Adviser to the Government on World Trade Organization accession. Jolevski, while working for Booz Allen Hamilton, was managing the Business Environment Activity and the World Trade Organization Compliance Activity from 2004 to 2007. In November 2008, he was appointed the North Macedonian's Chief negotiator on the naming dispute with Greece.





VICTORIA NEMERENCO

*Coordinator of the Europeanization, Foreign and Security Policy Program, Institute for European Policies and Reforms, Chişinău*



## NATIONAL EVOLUTION AND FROZEN CONFLICTS

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While Russia's invasion in Ukraine had enormous effects on the Moldova's political stability, it still did not manage to cause irreparable damage. Nevertheless, the invasion marked the beginning of a series of challenges for the Moldovan government, making Moldova the second most affected state by this war. The security threats have registered an unprecedented increase and, as the war progressed, we had to deal with an economic, energy and security crisis: the issue of the frozen conflict of Transnistria and the cybersecurity threats being among the main ones.

First and foremost, the issue of territorial integrity remains a central concern. The protracted Transnistrian conflict is posing a continuous challenge to Moldova's sovereignty. The presence of Russian peacekeeping forces in the region, coupled with the separatist sentiment, creates a complicated situation. Since the beginning of the war, the political situation in Transnistria is tense due to its strongly expressed pro-Russian tendencies. Without direct Russian intents towards Transnistria, the military forces stationed there cannot serve as a potential escalation of the situation on their own. And at this point, we see that being an unlikely scenario given the resistance of the Ukrainian army, although Russian political pressure may increase.

Moldova is constantly attacked informationally, through propaganda and misinformation, with the sole purpose to weaken the citizens' trust in the state. Because they cannot reach Moldova militarily, they invest money to influence the mass media and the social networks with troll factories and financing criminal groups. As a response, certain measures were taken by the authorities, such as: blocking web portals, suspending the licenses of some television stations, preventing certain actors affiliated with Russia in carrying out violent acts, espionage, covert influence operations against the Republic of Moldova, but also cyber-attacks. As we advance technologically, so do the tools available to those with malicious intent. Our

nation must invest in robust cybersecurity infrastructure and foster international cooperation to mitigate the risks posed by cyber threats.

The Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia (ATUG)<sup>1</sup> is also an area with strong pro-Russian tendencies, being far away from the national informational space. Moscow regularly uses Russian and regional media to reinforce ethnic and political separatism in the autonomy. The security situation is thus as volatile as in Transnistria amid the developments in Ukraine, with the local population believing that the leadership from Kiev and the Western states are to blame for the conflict.

Moldova has been a target of the hybrid aggression launched by Russia, and energy was one of the tools used to put pressure on the government and the citizens. Prior to war, Moldova used to buy around one third of electricity needed for consumption from Ukraine, while the rest was coming from the Cuciurgan power plant in Transnistria. With the decrease of gas supply from Russia, that was used to produce electricity in the said power plant and suspension of supply of electricity from Ukraine, Moldova has been forced to look for alternatives. The crisis was activated with the aim of weakening the economy of Moldova and predisposing the citizens to certain political and social actions. Due to an urgent connection to the European grid, Moldova energy resilience has evolved.

The international community is very attentive to all the developments going on in the Republic of Moldova. Before, the European Union and NATO promoted a pragmatic and, in some places, even cautious policy due to Russia's interests, now the situation has changed substantially, these actors showing an unprecedented openness towards the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia. The EU has reconfirmed its support by granting Moldova the EU candidate status in 2022.

NATO's support for the Republic of Moldova is increasing both politically and in the field of security. As a result of both Madrid Summit (2022) and Vilnius Summit (2023), we see more support than ever from the Allies under the form of tailored political and practical support, but also support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova within its internationally recognised borders and a call on Russia to withdraw all its forces stationed in the Transnistrian region. The increase in political support is felt not only in the speeches of the alliance officials, but also through high-ranking visits to the Republic of Moldova. As we continue to work towards Euro-Atlantic integration, the NATO Partnership serves as a catalyst for the modernisation of our armed forces and the alignment of our security institutions with international standards.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mei.edu/publications/autonomous-territorial-unit-gagauzia-new-focal-point-russo-turkish-competition>.

Questions about Moldova's capacities to withstand the potential aggression sparked even more questions about the neutrality status of the country. Constitutionally, Moldova is a neutral state, even though this status was less chosen and rather imposed as an instrument of foreign policy. Russia is exploiting this status to its advantage, trying to prove that being neutral equals to being protected. The challenge for the authorities lies in explaining this aspect to the citizens, as well as what the military neutrality of the Republic of Moldova means, in the context in which Russia openly asserts its militarism and utters direct threats to Chişinău.

However, we and the partners learned the lessons, we took some steps, and started to strengthen ourselves institutionally. In this sense, was created the Center for Strategic Communication and Combating Disinformation; and now we are creating the National Cybersecurity Agency (ANC - Agenţiei Naţionale pentru Securitate Cibernetică), in order to effectively fight disinformation and strengthen our national security.

**Victoria Nemerenco** works as the Coordinator of the Europeanization, Foreign and Security Policy Program at the Institute for European Policies and Reforms. Victoria has completed training in European law and economics at the Riga Graduate School of Law and at the Council of Europe Schools of Political Studies, and interned at Moldova's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, and at UNHCR. Her work and research focusses on security, local development, European integration, good governance, and elections and media influence. Victoria holds a master's degree in political science and political and electoral management from Moldova State University, and a Bachelor's degree in international relations and international organization from the University of Groningen.





ALBA ÇELA

*Executive Director, Albanian Institute  
for International Studies, Tirana*

## THE BALKANS AND THE PATH TO FULL EURO-ATLANTIC INCLUSION: ESSENTIALS AND NICE-HAVES

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The integration of the Western Balkan countries in the Euro-Atlantic community is the only possible pathway for this region. Despite all the issues related to this process, our countries have formally agreed and committed to the pathway towards the European Union (EU) integration. As also highlighted by Dr Ivan Vejvoda in one of his episodes of “Vienna Coffeehouse Conversations” (Europe’s Future programme)<sup>1</sup>, even Serbian people would never live in Russia but would rather migrate and study in the West, even though Serbia is one of the main countries with a sceptical and non-favourable opinion about the EU integration. In the matter of the pathway towards the EU membership, it is therefore crucial to consider these two factors: formal commitment of the governments and public opinion.

This is the only stabilising process, as well as the only antidote to the negative developments in our countries (as the ones in Bosnia and Kosovo). According to my opinion, the effectiveness of this integration process has been hindered by its delays, threatening its credibility. Further discussions were held in our region, as well as in Brussels and Berlin, about the credibility of both the European integration process and the asymmetrical bilateral disputes between member states and candidate states.

North Macedonia, for instance, has done huge sacrifices in this sense, but it is still in the process of EU integration due to bilateral disputes. Fortunately, Albania has made significant steps forward, but its disputes with Greece have the potential to become obstacles too. The credibility of such integration also depends on the EU’s effort in trying to solve these internal disputes among Western Balkan countries,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://podcasts.apple.com/it/podcast/vienna-coffee-house-conversations-with-ivan-vejvoda/id1542284088>.

which may actually rise up in the future. In accordance with the “regatta principle”<sup>2</sup>, each Balkan country must leverage on its own merits to become EU member. At the same time, each country should not impede others towards the integration process. This is the reason why creating an effective strategy to face bilateral issues is so important.

Secondly, despite some symbolic steps forward (such as the opening of negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia and the candidate status for Bosnia) the war in Ukraine – the “new momentum” – has provoked some delays in the enlargement process. We need to consider the implications of this momentum.

It already transformed countries like Ukraine, Moldova, and even Georgia, but we also need to consider what will happen in the future, starting from the next meeting of the EU Council in December 2023.<sup>3</sup> The EU is starting to discuss its future. In September 2023, the Report of the Franco-German Working Group on EU Institutional Reform entitled “Sailing on High Seas: Reforming and Enlarging the EU for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” has proposed policies and reforms to make the EU institutions ready for the enlargement.<sup>4</sup> In this regard, certain dates have been launched (like 2030 as the target date for enlargement), but it is of key importance that all the candidates are included in this discussion of the EU’s future, through an open and honest path. This means including both the countries that are already EU members and those that are in the pathway towards EU membership.

In Albania the public opinion is strongly pro-Western, so the country is less vulnerable to Russian or Chinese influence. Nevertheless, we are not immune from general disappointment. The country is currently experiencing both “brain drain” and “labour drain” phenomena, which represent huge issues for us. Making this choice, leaving Albania, the country is deprived of huge potential, involving both democratic and economic potential. Again, there is only one antidote to that: EU membership.

My call is for the EU to be more strategic in thinking about the region and to build much more credibility for this enlargement process. Credibility depends on clarity and transparency: much more than a timeline we need a credible engagement. It is 20 years since the Thessaloniki Forum (June 2003) when this promise was made for the first time, and we need to see it implemented and reinforced.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2007/04/01/nato-and-the-balkans-the-case-for-greater-integration/index.html>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2023/12/13/>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://institutdelors.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Paper-EU-reform.pdf>.

**Alba Çela's** main areas of research are: democratisation, political parties, national identity and European integration. She taught as an Associate Professor of political science and economics at two private universities in Tirana and was a recipient of the prestigious John Gunn scholarship at the University of Washington and Lee in Virginia. Additionally, Ms Çela participates as an independent expert in research, monitoring, evaluation and advocacy projects for several international donors and organisations such as OSFA, FES, BIRN etc. Her latest publication is entitled "Ghost political parties and the deformation of democracy: the case of Albania and the region".



Soviet mosaic on the progress of electrification, Chisinau (Moldova).



A vibrant mosaic artwork featuring a large eye on the left, a star in the center, and a figure on the right, with a black vertical pole in the foreground. The mosaic is composed of small tiles in various colors including red, blue, yellow, green, and white. The eye is rendered in shades of blue and yellow. The star is a bright yellow and red. The figure on the right is composed of red, blue, and yellow tiles. The background is a mix of blue, red, and green tiles.

# CONCLUDING REMARKS



GIULIO TREMONTI

*President, Foreign Affairs Committee,  
Chamber of Deputies, Rome*



## CONCLUDING REMARKS

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I would like to start talking about a book entitled “Europa 33” by George Simenon. At that time, before becoming a thriller writer, Simenon worked for big European newspapers, reporting from the Baltic area to the Black Sea. The book illustrates the story of Europe in 1933. A sick Europe, shaken by terrifying jolts, whose doctor makes her say the number 33 to ascertain the health of her lungs. During that time, the whole Europe was the “sick man”. Today, in a different way, we are turning back in the same place, where history is inevitable. What is past, is Shakespeare’s *Tempest* Act 2 where an island conjures a utopic vision of a country prosperous and at peace.

Until yesterday, the geopolitical situation of Europe could be analysed through two parallel perspectives:

1. The Pan-European (or continental) perspective, meaning the ancestral idea of a Europe that goes from the Atlantic to the United States;
2. The internal perspective.

The first perspective is characterized by the progressive integration between Germany and Russia, on the basis of the gas stream network and an economic system based on imports of low energy from Russia and exports of high-priced products to China.

But the war in Ukraine has dramatically changed this structure. It not only signalled a turning point in our history: today Europe is also facing the crisis of globalisation in a new fragmented and furious world. In this geopolitical scenario - representing the future of Europe - Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland Mateusz Morawiecki underlined the need «to make Europe great again» during his speech at the Heidelberg University.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.pl/web/primeminister/mateusz-morawiecki-at-heidelberg-university---europe-at-a-historic-turning-point>.

This purpose requires a new European political machinery, including a new political software and constitutional hardware. The current issues cannot be solved by old means. Today, the dogmatic idea of democracy as the new political software is dominant. Europe is divided into two parts: the first one which is supposed to be totally democratic, and the other one which is considered not enough. The European Union (EU) cannot be based on this artificial separation between modernity and traditions, between elite and common people. It is important to remember our past, in order to build our future, especially when in so many parts of Europe, memory is so troubled. Quoting Winston S. Churchill “a love for tradition has never weakened a nation, indeed it has strengthened nations in their hour of peril”. The EU was founded by great men, and it cannot be led by technicians.

Today, Europe is losing its soul, drowned in the liquid of finance. The old European triad “*Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*” is better than the last triad “*Globalité, Marché, Monnaie*”.<sup>2</sup>

During his speech in Budapest, Pope Francis talked about roots and bridges as a symbol of the necessary union of European cultures.<sup>3</sup> Putin destroyed any bridge across Europe, and we must do the opposite.

In addition, the post-modern fluid doctrines must be taken into account. Forgetting family and nativity, imposing a new neutral and artificial European identity, are producing dramatic social effects. Today our demographic curves are extremely dramatic: in a short time, no cradles, no welfare state and consequently no public health and no pensions. For certain people this is not relevant, but for the masses of poor people this is a real strategy and it is a tragedy for the EU. There is no democracy without demography.

In the season of the new EU enlargement, from Ukraine to the Balkans and so on, a renewed political hardware, and a new European constitutional architecture, are absolutely necessary. When, in 2003, Italy assumed the presidency of the EU, a first proposal to issue “Eurobond” was delivered in order to finance European infrastructures and military industry. The reaction to this proposal was negative. The orthodox (German) reaction was purely financial: they rejected public debt, be it national or European. On the other side, the British reaction was more political and intelligent. The answer was “Eurobond means euro budget; defence means nation building. No thanks!”.

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<sup>2</sup> With this concept Honorable G. Tremonti describes the totalitarian ideology of the 1900s, led by «*the political divination of the market*» - Giulio Tremonti, “*Exit Strategy: Ending the Tyranny of Finance*”, Rizzoli Ex Libris, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2023/documents/20230503-udienza-generale.html>.

Now, two decades after, European debt has increased and Europe is experiencing a war. During the war in 1941, in the Manifesto of Ventotene the European foreign policy and European defence were defined essential for building of the EU.<sup>4</sup> Well, the time has come.

**Giulio Tremonti** is Member of the Italian Parliament from 1994, President of the Foreign and European Affairs Committee of the Chamber of Deputies. Giulio Tremonti has served as Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, Minister of Economy and Finance and Vice President of the Chamber of Deputies. Giulio Tremonti is the founding partner of the Virtax firm (1985), where he is engaged in professional practice as a senior partner. He is also Chairman of Aspen Institute Italia. Tremonti is member of the Moral Sciences class of the Lombard Academy of Sciences and Letters and Senior Counsel, admitted to the Supreme Court, and a member of the Milan Bar Association. He has been a visiting professor at the Institute of Comparative Law in Oxford. He is co-editor of "Rivista di diritto finanziario e scienza delle finanze". He is the author of various publications including: "Globalizzazione. Le piaghe e la cura possibile" (2022); "Le tre profezie – Appunti per il futuro" (2019); "Rinascimento" (2017) coauthored with V. Sgarbi. From 1984 to 1994, he was a columnist for Corriere della Sera.

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<sup>4</sup> [https://www.ceas.europa.eu/ceas/ventotene-manifesto-and-future-europe\\_en](https://www.ceas.europa.eu/ceas/ventotene-manifesto-and-future-europe_en).



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**MBDA**

## BALKAN AND BLACK SEA PERSPECTIVES 2023

*High-Level Conference organised by the NATO Defense College Foundation  
in co-operation with the NATO Public Diplomacy Division,  
the NATO Defense College, Philip Morris Italy,  
Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo, and MBDA Italy*

Rome | Thursday, the 7<sup>th</sup> of December 2023

Venue: *Sala Verdi, Hotel Quirinale, Via Nazionale 7*

**14,20 – 14,30** *Welcome Remarks*

- **Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo**, President, NATO Defense College Foundation, Rome
- **Marc Ozawa**, Senior Researcher, Research Division, NATO Defense College, Rome

**14,30 – 14,40** *Opening Remarks*

- **Nicola De Santis**, Head, Engagements Section, Public Diplomacy Division, NATO HQ, Brussels

### Session I Prevention and Consolidation

*The tasks that NATO has to accomplish in the region are connected but differentiated according to specific political and strategic conditions. In the Balkans, NATO's work consists in crisis*

*management and prevention, along with other relevant institutions like the EU, the OSCE and the UN. The Black Sea instead needs a classic deterrence and dialogue approach. Taking stock of recent experiences, the session charts possible courses of action. What synergies can be obtained within the Alliance and with other international actors?*

Chair: **Alexandra von Nahmen**, Chief, Brussels Bureau, Deutsche Welle, Brussels

- **Tacan Ildem**, Chairman, Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM), Istanbul
- **Olav Reinertsen**, Ambassador of Norway to Bosnia and Herzegovina; and NATO Contact Point Embassy in BiH, Sarajevo
- **Laris Gaiser**, former Political Advisor, Kosovo Force (KFOR), NATO, Ljubljana
- **Alina Inayeh**, Senior Fellow, German Marshall Fund of the United States, Bucharest

*Q&A Session*

**15,50 – 16,10**     *Coffee Break*

**16,10 – 17,20**

## Session II

### Towards a Viable Cyber and Business Environment

*The war of aggression in Ukraine has witnessed a very intense confrontation both in the cyber-sphere and the illegal economy dimension, where malign actors partner with organised crime across the borders. We have to fight back against regular cyber-attacks and disinformation campaigns. What are the necessary means and agreements to restore a safe IT and business environment? The objective is to maximise the economic viability of Ukraine while undercutting illegal profits favouring hostile actors.*

Chair: **Gabriele Carrer**, Journalist, Formiche, Rome

- **Galina Yanchenko**, Member, Committee on Economic Development, Parliament, Kiev
- **Marko Banović**, Analyst, Digital Forensic Center, Podgorica
- **Oksana Shvets**, Chief Policy Officer, American Chamber of Commerce in Ukraine, Kiev

*Q&A Session*

17,20 – 17,40 *Coffee Break*

### Session III

## Restoring Regional Resilience

*The end of the hostilities notwithstanding, the whole region needs a multifaceted resilience recovery approach that has to be prepared and carried out according to the political and economic developments. How is the gradual inclusion of the region in the Euro-Atlantic community progressing, and with what perspectives?*

Chair: **Solomon Passy**, former Foreign Minister and Signatory to NATO and EU Accession Treaties of Bulgaria; and President, Atlantic Club, Sofia

- **Zoran Jolevski**, Vice Rector for International Cooperation, European University; and former Minister of Defence, Republic of North Macedonia, Skopje
- **Victoria Nemerenco**, Coordinator of the Europeanization, Foreign and Security Policy Program, Institute for European Policies and Reforms, Chişinău
- **Alba Çela**, Executive Director, Albanian Institute for International Studies, Tirana

*Q&A Session*

18,50 – 19,00 *Concluding Remarks*

- **Giulio Tremonti**, President, Foreign Affairs Committee, Chamber of Deputies, Rome









The Mostar bridge in Bosnia-Herzegovina. A symbol for European integration.

