BASIC INSTINCT
THE CASE FOR MORE NATO IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

STUDY OF THE CENTER FOR EURO-ATLANTIC STUDIES FROM SERBIA

SEPTEMBER 2017

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National Endowment for Democracy
Supporting freedom around the world
We need more NATO, more EU, and more NATO and EU.

Rose Eilene Gottemoeller, Deputy Secretary General of NATO, at Lennart Meri conference in Tallinn, Riga, on a panel Less NATO More EU, May 2017
Russia is simply using every aspect of an ethnic tension of political destabilization of any kind of conflict to its own advantage, which means to the disadvantage of the West and of liberal democracy. That is the most potent foreign influence in the Balkans, which we need to counter in some way.

Roland Freudenstein, Policy Director, Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, in an interview for European Western Balkans, June 2017

The way to deter a crisis is through speed of recognition, speed of political decision and speed of assembly. Unity of NATO and unity of the EU are absolutely necessary for deterrence. There is no room for miscalculation.


We were often asked by individuals what does the membership in NATO brings to each one of us, what kind of direct benefits would bring them. We responded – to you personally nothing, this is more for the society as a whole and a state, ideas and alliances. Everything else is propaganda, and we do not do propaganda.

Milica Kovačević, Info Center on Euro-Atlantic integration and director, Center for democratic transition, at Conference - The reasons for the stagnation of NATO integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina- Regional Context and the Future, in Sarajevo, April 2017
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Foreword by Jelena Milić

Multiculturalism presents democratic challenges. Even if enacted with the best intentions, say, to stop a bloody war, ethnic divisions embedded in state foundations multiculturalism can further polarization and politicization of ethnic identities manifested in political, social, and economic systems through poor governance, suppression of individual liberties, corruption, and cronyism.

In the Western Balkans today, political parties of certain ethnicities, or groups gathered around ethnicity or fate solely, do not fulfill even their limited democratic role of protecting ethnic and cultural rights. Instead, these groups have become weaponized, representing the ideals and interests of other, often malign, structures, rather than those of their own constituents. The situation is the same for those who fear the long hand of justice due to their role in perpetrating war crimes. They are ready to align with those who support impunity for such offenses. Embedded in semi-reformed security systems with weak democratic oversight, they too can be weaponized, and incited not to serve the laws of their country.

The Western international community has for far too long tolerated such practices with the belief that local leaders and citizens will resolve growing problems within the Euro-Atlantic integration framework. However, not all politicians are democratic leaders, nor are all citizens pro-democracy and ready to fight for liberal ideals in the long run. The global rise of identity politics and single-issue movements have only complicated the already chaotic scheme of political systems in this region. The current geopolitical environment, characterized by a revisionist Russia, chaos in Syria, a refugee and migration crises in Europe and the Western Balkans, increasing terrorist threats worldwide, internal disputes within the European Union, and an unprecedented political environment in the United States, as well as China ante portas, have all captured the world's attention. As a result, the United States' policy towards the Western Balkans is on auto pilot, and across the broad, international actors have lowered their standards and hopes for the region for the sake of stability. Hence, “stabilitocracy,” is the new buzz word linked to the region.

Stabilitocracy does not guarantee stability, even in a calm and predictable geopolitical environment. In our present situation, it promises even less. If the past few years can serve as a guide, the future of the Western Balkans can be described as the continued suppression of democratic processes by authoritarian leaders, albeit under the guise of liberal labels. Stabilitocracy in times of non-democratic and hostile influences produces homegrown little green man of a different kind.

The Western Balkans, in one way or another, suffers all of the above mention maladies, and then some. These cannot be fixed by the countries of the region alone, even if the ruling elite had a sincere commitment to democracy and regional cooperation. In
such a situation, they are not reliable partners to the West even for ad hoc anti-terrorism, anti-corruption, migration control, and other related projects. The only way to help the region and reduce the risk of spillover of negative effects is a return to our best and basic instincts: democracy as the most secure and durable form of governance.

While the recent intensification of the European Union’s approach to the region has produced some positive results, it was Montenegro’s accession to NATO and the formation of a pro-EU and pro-NATO fast track for the Macedonian government this year that proved the turning point. This event served as a beacon for other aspirants to Euro-Atlantic structures, a clear sign that the open door policy works. However, the case of Montenegro also served as a warning, demonstrating that Russia will take bolder and more hostile measures than previously imagined to halt the process of Euro-Atlantic integration in the region. The lesson for other applicants is clear. Homegrown little green men are easy to recruit. Luckily, even in an environment of stabilitocracy, they can be arrested or expelled. However, until underlying issues of politicized ethnicities, impunity for war crimes, and unreformed security sectors are resolved, they will not be contained.

The European Union and its Member States, and NATO and its member steps in particular have the necessary tools, experience, and legitimate mandate to assist the region’s stabilization and democratization. All the current regional governments formally profess the desire to join Euro-Atlantic structures or to cooperate closely (Serbia with NATO), and are in some kind of contractual obligation or integration process. Their basic instinct towards progress and stability is still kicking in, albeit weakly. But there is a lack of determination by the political West to use its own strengths and commitment to declared values to set the region on a proper course: towards democracy.

Remember, the system involves the right of the people freely to determine their own destiny. The exercise of this right requires a system that guarantees freedom of expression, belief and association, free and competitive elections, respect for the inalienable rights of individuals and minorities, free communications media, and the rule of law.

Jelena Milić
Director, Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies
Executive Summary

*Basic Instinct: The Case for More NATO in The Western Balkans* is a result of a year-long study conducted under the CEAS project *Continued Fulfillment of IPAP Commitments: Stepping Closer to NATO*, supported by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) in the United States.

The report particularly addresses four underlying issues common to all countries of the Western Balkans: incomplete transitional justice processes; incomplete security sector reforms; constitutionally or otherwise embedded solutions that propel an illiberal politicization of ethnicities; and internationally-led or sponsored processes that may serve short-term goals, but are implemented in a way that undermines the separation of powers and the strengthening of independent institutions and decision-making processes in already poorly-governed countries in the region.

The report argues that those issues could, if not properly addressed, bring to a halt the process of democratization in the region and the region’s deeper integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. Furthermore, these issues create a fertile ground for non-democratic and hostile hybrid and conventional obstructive actions conducted by state or non-state actors.

The report’s main conclusion is that NATO should be more relevant when it comes to ensuring strategic stability in Europe and the Western Balkans, which should be fully integrated into Euro-Atlantic structures. Bearing in mind the new strategic environment, full integration into these structures should be a basic instinct response of all truly liberal and democratic forces in the Region.

The following is stated in the Conclusions and Recommendations section of the report: Given that all governments in the region, elected through a series of not too irregular, if not entirely fair election processes, and most of their legitimate oppositions have pledged commitment to their countries’ integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, with most of them expressing the will to become fully-fledged EU and NATO members, NATO and its Member States can, with full legitimacy, address all of the above-mentioned underlying challenges, and provide incentives and capacities for the reforms that would overcome them. By admitting Montenegro as the 29th Member State, NATO has demonstrated that it is ready to move forward in a changed political environment in the Western Balkans faster and bolder than any other global or regional actor. The fact that the newly-elected Macedonian government is already looking for ways to reactivate its NATO membership and solidify ties with NATO leaders through upcoming meetings confirm that NATO can and should be the leading actor in a sustained and comprehensive process of stabilization and democratization in the region. When compared to EU and NATO Member States, societies in the Western Balkans are less resilient to newly emerging global threats and hostile hybrid operations, which increasingly threaten the region. In addition, regional co-
operation is still insufficient in many important sectors, primarily in defense and security. Therefore NATO should be more relevant than ever when it comes to ensuring strategic stability in Europe and the Western Balkans. Bearing in mind the new strategic environment, full integration into Euro-Atlantic structures should be a basic instinct response for all truly liberal and democratic forces in the region.

This report was made possible with partial funding from the NED, and CEAS is proud to be among NED grantees. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of NED.
Introduction and Methodology

Basic Instinct: The Case for More NATO in The Western Balkans is a result of a year-long study conducted under the CEAS project Continued Fulfillment of IPAP Commit-ments: Stepping Closer to NATO, supported by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) in the United States.

During the preparation of this report, the CEAS team conducted a broad literature review covering topics including NATO, NATO and EU (EU) relations, NATO and US relations, Euro-Atlantic integration, and cooperation processes between countries in the Western Balkans.

The CEAS team held a series of on and off the record discussions with representatives of think tanks and civil society organizations, independent policy analysts, experts, diplomats, governmental officials and journalists in the field of NATO and Western Balkans issues. These sessions allowed the CEAS team to develop a broad understanding of varying approaches to the topics addressed in this report.

During the reporting period, members of the CEAS team also participated in several high-level conferences and expert forums, in which several of the issues addressed in this report were discussed and analyzed.

In addition, as part of the research conducted in relation to this report, CEAS organized two high-level events on NATO and NATO relations with Serbia. In November 2016,

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1 CEAS has compiled the literature that it finds most compelling and relevant on its website www.ceas-serbia.org in the section “In Focus.”

2 The Western Balkans region includes the following countries: Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania—so called WB6. For the purpose of this Study, separate case studies have been commissioned for all countries except Albania.

CEAS held the fourth Belgrade NATO Week, which addressed NATO relations with the EU, NATO relations with Serbia, the transatlantic community’s relations with Russia, outcomes of the Warsaw NATO Summit, implications of the Summit for the Western Balkans, the inclusion of the Western Balkans in East Europe, and the United States’ elections and their impact on the future of transatlantic relations. The second event, held in June 2017, was a roundtable with NATO official and Serbian government representatives, dedicated to the implementation of Serbia’s Individual Partnership Action Plan with NATO. Both of these events were considered part of the research process and key findings have been included in this report’s Conclusions and Recommendations section.

The main author of this report is Ms. Jelena Milić, director of the Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies and Ms. Anda Petković, CEAS project manager as assistant author and editor.

CEAS also invited regional experts to submit case studies for their respective countries that addressed the current state of affairs of Euro-Atlantic integration processes and remaining challenges. The contributors are Ms. Marijana Toma from Serbia; Mr. Vesko Garčević and Ms Tamara Nikčević from Montenegro; Dr. Emir Suljagić from Bosnia and Herzegovina; Mr. Astrit Istrefi from Kosovo, and Mr. Dane Teleski and Vladimir Petreski from Macedonia and Mr. Fayez Risheg from Croatia. Dr. Martin Hala from the Czech Republic also provided an analysis of China’s increasing role in Central and Southern Europe. These contributions are integral parts of the report’s country-specific sections and CEAS hopes to continue cooperation with these authors.


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5 NATO respects the neutrality of Serbia but is ready for greater cooperation. Written by Filip Lukić. EWB. June 2017. Available at: https://europeanwesternbalkans.rs/nato-postuje-neutralnost-srbije-ali-spreman-na-vucu-saradnju/.

6 Vladimir Petreski is the editor at Media Fact Checking Service from Skopje, Macedonia.


CEAS highly recommends these reports, and humbly hopes that Basic Instinct: The Case for More NATO in The Western Balkans will serve as a complementary text for those who wish to understand the application of the policies recommendations described in these reports in the context of the Western Balkans.

In the introductory section of this report, CEAS quotes the following experts and officials: Rose Gotemoeller, deputy secretary general of NATO; Lieutenant General Frederick Benjamin Hodges, commander of U.S. Army Europe; Roland Freudenstein, policy director, Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies; and Milica Kovačević, coordinator, Info Center on Euro-Atlantic Integration and director, Center for Democratic Transition. CEAS sincerely hopes that their messages will be heard and analyzed by policy makers in NATO, the US, the EU, and Western Balkans states, as the target audience for this report.

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1. **Key NATO Warsaw Summit Conclusions and References to the Western Balkans**

At the 27th formal meeting of the heads of state and heads of government of the NATO, held at the National Stadium in Warsaw, Poland, in July 2016, the Warsaw Summit Communiqué\(^\text{10}\) was issued. The introductory part of this document states:

“Today, faced with an increasingly diverse, unpredictable, and demanding security environment, we have taken further action to defend our territory and protect our populations, project stability beyond our borders, and continue the political, military, and institutional adaptation of our Alliance. There is an arc of insecurity and instability along NATO’s periphery and beyond. The Alliance faces a range of security challenges and threats that originate both from the east and from the south; from state and non-state actors; from military forces and from terrorist, cyber, or hybrid attacks. Russia’s aggressive actions, including provocative military activities in the periphery of NATO territory and its demonstrated willingness to attain political goals by the threat and use of force, are a source of regional instability, fundamentally challenge the Alliance, have damaged Euro-Atlantic security, and threaten our long-standing goal of a Europe whole, free, and at peace. Our security is also deeply affected by the security situation in the Middle East and North Africa, which has deteriorated significantly across the whole region. Terrorism, particularly as perpetrated by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) / Da’esh, has risen to an unprecedented level of intensity, reaches into all of Allied territory, and now represents an immediate and direct threat to our nations and the international community. Instability in the Middle East and North Africa also contributes to the refugee and migrant crisis (…) and so renewed emphasis has been placed on deterrence and collective defense. At the same time, NATO must retain its ability to respond to crises beyond its borders, and remain actively engaged in projecting stability and enhancing international security through working with partners and other international organizations.”

In Warsaw, the relationship between NATO and the EU was further improved: “A Joint Declaration identified key areas for expanding cooperation, including countering hybrid and cyber threats, supporting our partners in defense capacity building, and increasing maritime security. Announced is expanding NATO cooperation with the EU in the Mediterranean Sea, where information sharing and coordination can make NATO and the EU more effective in tackling illegal migration, terrorism and other challenges. Allies agreed, in principle, on a possible NATO role in the Central Mediterranean, to complement or support the EU’s Operation Sophia.”

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Additionally, the role of Russian aggression was further underlined: “Russia’s aggressive actions, including provocative military activities in the periphery of NATO territory and its demonstrated willingness to attain political goals by the threat and use of force, are a source of regional instability, fundamentally challenge the Alliance, have damaged Euro-Atlantic security, and threaten our long-standing goal of a Europe whole, free, and at peace”.

With regards to the Western Balkans, the NATO Warsaw Summit Communiqué stated: “The Western Balkans is a region of strategic importance, as demonstrated by our long history of cooperation and operations in the region. We remain fully committed to the stability and security of the Western Balkans, as well as to supporting the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of countries in the region. Democratic values, rule of law, domestic reforms, and good neighborly relations are vital for regional cooperation and for the Euro-Atlantic integration process. We welcome recent progress on border demarcation in the region. The Alliance will continue to work closely with the Western Balkans to maintain and promote regional and international peace and security. We task the Council to prepare a report on NATO’s activities and relations in the region for submission to Foreign Ministers in December.

Strengthening NATO-Serbia relations are of benefit to the Alliance, to Serbia, and to the whole region. We welcome the continued progress made in building the NATO-Serbia partnership and support further political dialogue and practical cooperation to this end. We also welcome the progress achieved in the EU-facilitated Belgrade-Prishtina dialogue and encourage both parties to implement the agreements reached and to sustain continued progress. We welcome Kosovo’s aspirations to improve its ability to ensure safety and security for all its inhabitants, as well as to contribute to security in the Western Balkans.

The invitation to Montenegro in December 2015 to join our Alliance and the subsequent signature of the Accession Protocol in May 2016 recognizes the reforms Montenegro has undertaken, the commitment it has shown to our common values, and its contribution to international security. Montenegro now has Invitee status and is integrating into NATO activities. We look forward to the expeditious conclusion of the ratification of the Accession Protocol, and to Montenegro’s continued progress on reform, before and after accession, in order to enhance its contribution to the Alliance. We appreciate the significant contribution Montenegro makes to NATO-led operations.
Today we reaffirm our commitment to
the Open Door Policy, a founding prin-
ciple of the Washington Treaty and one
of the Alliance’s great successes. Mon-
tenegro’s presence with us today is a
tangible demonstration of this, and we
look forward to welcoming the country
as our next member as soon as possible.
Euro-Atlantic integration advances dem-
cratic values, reform, and respect for the
rule of law. The freedom and prosperity
of our societies are built on these founda-
tions. Euro-Atlantic integration also provides a path to stability and strengthens collective
security. Successive rounds of enlargement have enhanced our security and the security
of the entire Euro-Atlantic region. NATO’s door is open to all European democracies
which share the values of our Alliance, which are willing and able to assume the respon-
sibilities and obligations of membership, which are in a position to further the principles
of the Treaty, and whose inclusion can contribute to the security of the North Atlantic
area. Decisions on enlargement are for NATO itself. We remain fully committed to the
integration of those countries that aspire to join the Alliance, judging each on its own
merits. We encourage those partners who aspire to join the Alliance – Georgia, the former
Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina – to continue to imple-
ment the necessary reforms and decisions to prepare for membership. We will continue
to offer support to their efforts and look to them to take the steps necessary to advance
their aspirations.

We reaffirm our commitment to the terri-
torial integrity and sovereignty of a sta-
ble and secure Bosnia and Herzegovina
and our full support for its membership
aspirations. We encourage the leadership
of Bosnia and Herzegovina to continue
demonstrating political will and to work
constructively for the benefit of all its cit-
izens in pursuit of reforms. We will offer
our continued support to defense reform
efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We
welcome the recent agreement by the
Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina
on principles for the defense review and
urge its completion as soon as possible.
We welcome the progress made on reg-
istration of immovable defense property

Additionally, the role of Russian
aggression was further underlined:
“Russia’s aggressive actions,
including provocative military
activities in the periphery of NATO
territory and its demonstrated
willingness to attain political goals
by the threat and use of force, are
a source of regional instability,
fundamentally challenge the Alliance,
have damaged Euro-Atlantic security,
and threaten our long-standing goal of
a Europe whole, free, and at peace”.

Warsaw Summit Communiqué, NATO,
March 2017
to the state, but we look to the leadership of Bosnia and Herzegovina to accelerate efforts toward meeting the requirements set by NATO Foreign Ministers in Tallinn in April 2010 so that its first Membership Action Plan cycle can be activated as soon as possible, which remains our goal. Allies will keep developments under active review. We commend Bosnia and Herzegovina for its contributions to NATO-led operations and for its commitment to regional dialogue, cooperation, and security.”

2. EU Global Strategy and References to the Western Balkans

High Representative Federica Mogherini presented the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy to EU leaders in Brussels at the EU Summit in June 2016. The strategy, named Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe, reflects the collective views expressed in the process and offers a strategic vision for the EU’s global role.11

“The EU will invest further in strong bonds across the Atlantic, both north and south. A solid transatlantic partnership through NATO and with the United States and Canada helps us strengthen resilience, address conflicts, and contribute to effective global governance. NATO, for its members, has been the bedrock of Euro-Atlantic security for almost 70 years. It remains the strongest and most effective military alliance in the world. The EU will deepen its partnership with NATO through coordinated defense capability development, parallel and synchronized exercises, and mutually reinforcing actions to build the capacities of our partners, counter hybrid and cyber threats, and promote maritime security.”

The Global Strategy for the EU’s Foreign and Security Policy also stated: “State and Societal Resilience to our East and South. It is in the interests of our citizens to invest in the resilience of states and societies to the east stretching into Central Asia, and to the south down to Central Africa. Under the current EU enlargement policy, a credible accession process grounded in strict and fair conditionality is vital to enhance the resilience

of countries in the Western Balkans and of Turkey. Under the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), many people wish to build closer relations with the Union: our enduring power of attraction can spur transformation in these countries. But resilience is also a priority in other countries within and beyond the ENP. The EU will support different paths to resilience, targeting the most acute cases of governmental, economic, societal and climate/energy fragility, as well as develop more effective migration policies for Europe and its partners. Within the scope of the current enlargement policy, the challenges of migration, energy security, terrorism and organized crime are shared between the EU, the Western Balkans and Turkey. They can only be addressed together. Yet the resilience of these countries cannot be taken for granted. The EU enjoys a unique influence in all these countries. The strategic challenge for the EU is therefore that of promoting political reform, rule of law, economic convergence and good neighborly relations in the Western Balkans and Turkey, while coherently pursuing cooperation across different sectors.”

When presenting the strategy, High Representative Mogherini stated: “The purpose, even existence, of our Union is being questioned. Yet, our citizens and the world need a strong EU like never before. In challenging times, a strong Union is one that thinks strategically, shares a vision and acts together. This is even more true after the British referendum. We will indeed have to rethink the way our Union works, but we perfectly know what to work for. We know what our principles, our interests and our priorities are. This is no time for uncertainty: our Union needs a Strategy. We need a shared vision, and common action.”
Emerging Cooperation between Russia and China in Central and Eastern Europe: The Curious Case of 16+1

In the past five years, China has become increasingly active in the Central and Eastern European region. This push has been institutionalized in 2012 with the creation of the 16+1 regional grouping that brings together 16 Central and Eastern European countries and the People’s Republic of China. In the first year or two, 16+1 was largely an empty shell in search of a mission. The mission only materialized with Xi Jinping’s new grandiose vision of the New Silk Road (later One Belt, One Road; now Belt and Road Initiative). Since the formulation of this strategy in late 2013, 16+1 has effectively become an East European sub-section of it, with specific projects routinely advertised as both 16+1 and Belt Road Initiative milestones.

16+1 is not a regional bloc for the Central and Eastern European countries to coordinate their policies towards China; rather, it is a platform for 16 bilateral relationships between Beijing and the Central and Eastern European states, a much preferred arrangement for China to employ her diplomacy - in any bilateral relationship, China is by default the bigger party. Instead of coordination, the Central and Eastern European countries often compete against each other to become China’s favored partner in the Region. In this race to the bottom, the Czech president would offer his country as the “unsinkable aircraft carrier for China in Europe”\(^{12}\), while at the same time, Serbian politicians might muse about “15+1+1”\(^{13}\), where Serbia stands so far ahead in the group as to form the other “1”.

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This competition among the 16 “partners” is partly a function of the grouping’s structure: 16+1 has a Secretariat\textsuperscript{14} with administrative staff at the MOFA in Beijing, where policies and projects are developed. In the individual Central and Eastern European countries, these projects are to be implemented through the local National Coordinators\textsuperscript{15}, typically vice-minister level government officials without relevant expertise or personnel support. The initiative is driven from China with Central and Eastern European countries largely reduced to passive recipients of policies developed in Beijing.

### A Bridge between Eurasia and Western Europe

Out of the 16 countries, eleven are EU members while five are not. Thirteen are NATO members, and three are not. There are three post-Soviet Baltic states, four Visegrad countries, six ex-Yugoslav republics, two Black Sea nations, and there is Albania. Despite the overall label, Central and Eastern European, these sixteen countries have little in common beyond a shared communist past and geographic location.

The shared communist history sometimes gets a mention in Chinese documents and speeches, but it is of course not much advertised (outside certain quarters) in the Central and Eastern European countries themselves. It does matter, however, to the extent that all of these 16 are “transitional societies”, sometimes called “fragile” or “vulnerable” democracies (until we found out that most democracies nowadays are fragile and vulnerable, including the old and established ones).

What really matters to China, however, is not so much the often contested recent history, but rather the undeniable hard facts of geography. The 16 Central and Eastern European countries form a geographic belt between the post-Soviet space and Western Europe. In the Chinese strategic thinking, 16+1 is therefore best understood as the next step in the gradual process of influence projection along the continental Eurasian landmass that started with the creation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2001 (or even with its predecessor, the Shanghai Five, established in 1996).  


\textsuperscript{15} Central and Eastern European Coordinators. China CEEC. Available at: [http://www.china-ceec.org/chn/zdogjxty/](http://www.china-ceec.org/chn/zdogjxty/).
Emerging Cooperation between Russia and China in Central and Eastern Europe: The Curious Case of 16+1

Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2001 (or even with its predecessor, the Shanghai Five, established in 1996).

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization as a Model for Russia-China Accommodation

The real breakthrough of Shanghai Cooperation Organization was that it provided the platform for power accommodation between Russia and China in Central Asia. This accommodation was difficult to establish at first as the long-term interests of both powers often clash. However, their short-term interests, namely their shared opposition against “Western (read United States) hegemony” - and even more specifically, against the “Color Revolutions” supposedly hatched by the United States to undermine authoritarian regimes - largely align.

The process of mutual accommodation much accelerated after the Crimea crisis and the imposition of Western sanctions on Russia in 2014. After Crimea, President Putin had little choice but to turn to China, even if Russia were to become a de facto junior partner in the new quasi-alliance. In 2015, Putin’s own neo-imperial project, the Eurasian Economic Union, signed a coordination treaty with Belt and Road Initiative (then still under the One Belt One Road moniker), which essentially expanded the Shanghai Cooperation Organization model of cooperation to the whole post-Soviet space. (And yes, the Color Revolutions got a mention in the document.) As Russian think-tankers put it, Russia effectively enabled China to become a World power by allowing it access into her own backyard in Central Asia and the post-Soviet space.

In the aftermath of the United States’ strategic retreat from the Middle East and Obama’s pivot to (East) Asia, China’s westward influence projection was extended from post-Soviet Central Asia to fill the void left by the Americans in Afghanistan and elsewhere. This policy (“March West” or Xi Jin18) was first advocated by one of the most influential Chinese foreign policy strategists Wang Jisi in 2012, and later absorbed into the One Belt One Road/Belt and Road Initiative concept.

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Another Backyard, Another Arrangement

A variation on the process of “Eurasian Integration,”19 or Russia’s and China’s attempts to create a new treaty arrangement in “Eurasia,” is now taking shape in Eastern Europe, also traditionally viewed from Moscow as Russia’s backyard. China’s entry into the Region with the 16+1 initiative can be understood in this context as the western-most wing of this emerging new treaty system in Eurasia. In stark contrast with the accommodation in Central Asia, however, there is one striking difference: Russia is not formally a member of 16+1.

This led some observers20 to conclude that China has outmaneuvered Russia in Central and Eastern European with the 16+1 concept. Some have even argued that Europe should welcome China’s advances in Central and Eastern European exactly for this reason as a counterweight to Russia’s growing influence there.21 The facts on the ground, however, do not appear to support such view. Russia has neither opposed, nor complained about China’s supposed incursion into its Central and Eastern European backyard. If anything, all signs show to smooth cooperation between the two powers throughout the Region.

We can see this at various levels. It is often the same actors who serve to advance the interests of both powers in Central and Eastern European, which hints at asset-sharing on the ground. In the Czech Presidential Office, for instance, advisors with a history of promoting Russian interests now look after the Chinese ones as well, without any apparent friction.22 (Some jitters have been reported23 among mid-level Russian diplomats during the recent Belt and Road Initiative summit in Beijing, which is to be expected in a rather uneven partnership dominated by China. No such discontent is evident in Central and Eastern European.)

In this context, the absence of Russia (and the post-Soviet republics of Belarus and the Ukraine) in the 16+1 arrangement appears counter-intuitive. After all, in Central Asia, Russia is an essential member of the whole treaty system. Yet Central and Eastern European is not Central Asia, and the formal arrangements need to be different in the two very different Regions. In Central Asia, the local post-Soviet “Stans” mostly welcome Russia’s participation as a counterbalance to the otherwise overwhelming Chinese influence. That

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23 Putin-Xi embrace masks misgivings on Belt and Road project. Written by Kathrin Hille. The Financial Times. May 2017. Available at: https://www.ft.com/content/d9122d30-386d-11e7-821a-6027b8a20f23.
would not be the case in Central and Eastern European where suspicions of Russia run deep among the locals, especially in the Baltic and Visegrad countries - whereas China is largely seen as a benign, or at least unknown, entity.

Russia’s direct participation in 16+1 would not be viable and make the whole arrangement automatically suspect. That doesn’t mean, however, that 16+1 does not have Russia’s prior consent. Without such consent, it is hard to imagine the whole project taking off so fast - or at all.

**Russia has neither opposed, nor complained about China’s supposed incursion into its Central and Eastern European backyard. If anything, all signs show to smooth cooperation between the two powers throughout the Region.**
*Note: The following section contains two recently published reports (GLOBSEC NATO Adaptation Initiative and A New Era of NATO-EU Cooperation: How to Make the Best of a Marriage of Necessity) on the topics of NATO and the EU, which CEAS consider useful for prospective readers of this study. In particular, the opinions and perspectives expressed in these pieces would be beneficial for the broader Serbian public and expert community, especially as Serbia begins the process of amending its constitution and adopting new strategic and doctrinal security and defense documents.

4. Excerpt from GLOBSEC NATO Adaptation Initiative

As a comprehensive NATO embraces the challenges of adaptation in this new geostrategic environment certain imperatives are clear: being comprehensive is far more than simply being about the membership of NATO. It is of course about that too, but it is also a great deal more. First of all it is about maintaining NATO’s unique role in enhancing intra-Alliance, and above all, Trans-Atlantic political dialogue. However, to be relevant, inside the Alliance there has to be a dialogue as well about the world outside the Alliance. Second, NATO is the indispensable connecting link between North America and Europe. Brexit notwithstanding, only the EU can deliver Europe. As a start, NATO and the EU must redefine their fundamental relationship, not only to share key tasks and burdens, but on a more fundamental level. In other words, to bring the capacity of NATO to bear to protect the populations of Europe from the increasing threats that are eroding the internal security environment of the region, NATO and the EU must work in close partnership. Some of the threats are state sponsored, some are non-state entities, some are criminal in nature, and some emerge from the general deterioration of the nation-state beyond NATO’s borders. In toto, they demand NATO and the EU reconsiders and enhances their relationship.

24 Report A New Era of NATO-EU Cooperation: How to Make the Best of a Marriage of Necessity was written by Raik Kristi and Järvenpää Pauli and published by International Centre for Defence and Security (ICDS).
Equally, NATO enlargement is not an end in itself; stability enlargement is. There are real sensitivities in some quarters to the continued expansion of NATO: the Alliance should certainly be circumspect in its plans for continued enlargement, but should continue with the Open Door policy. In the end NATO’s enlargement has always been about enhancing stability while providing for greater security and, whilst it is right that NATO should be circumspect in managing the specifics of its enlargement, there should be no suggestion that Russia has been rewarded for its intimidation and its bad behavior by NATO’s diverting from continued consideration of additional members.

NATO should also seek closer ties with, and explore areas and means for, cooperation with companion international organizations that are fellow travelers in the security environment of the 21st Century. Enhancing partnerships or creating relationships with such organizations as the OSCE, AU, the Arab League, the GCC, ASEAN/ARF, and even the SCO provide for a far more comprehensive NATO perspective on, and capacity to exert influence in, areas where additional cooperation could be useful, even vital. NATO should strengthen and/or create bilateral partnerships with states which carry strategic significance for NATO and their respective regions, and must begin to think more broadly strategically, by reaching out to and prioritizing support to fragile and/or failing states, sometimes located well beyond NATO’s periphery. NATO’s approach, in league with the EU and other Ios, as well humanitarian and development non-governmental organizations, and the private sector should be to apply coordinated and judicious capacity-building and security assistance, alongside these de-

As a comprehensive NATO embraces the challenges of adaptation in this new geostrategic environment certain imperatives are clear: being comprehensive is far more than simply being about the membership of NATO. It is of course about that too, but it is also a great deal more. First of all it is about maintaining NATO’s unique role in enhancing intra-Alliance, and above all, Trans-Atlantic political dialogue. However, to be relevant, inside the Alliance there has to be a dialogue as well about the world outside the Alliance. Second, NATO is the indispensable connecting link between North America and Europe. Brexit notwithstanding, only the EU can deliver Europe. As a start, NATO and the EU must redefine their fundamental relationship, not only to share key tasks and burdens, but on a more fundamental level. In other words, to bring the capacity of NATO to bear to protect the populations of Europe from the increasing threats that are eroding the internal security environment of the region, NATO and the EU must work in close partnership. Some of the threats are state sponsored, some are non-state entities, some are criminal in nature, and some emerge from the general deterioration of the nation-state beyond NATO’s borders. In toto, they demand NATO and the EU reconsiders and enhances their relationship.
As regards Russia, while NATO must comprehensively deter Russia, it should seek ways to rehabilitate the NRC that does not signal in any way NATO’s acceptance of its illegal aggression in Crimea and more broadly in Ukraine. Part of NATO’s capacity to adapt and to remain relevant must be its confidence and strength to both deter and to talk to Russia simultaneously.

As regards Russia, while NATO must comprehensively deter Russia, it should seek ways to rehabilitate the NRC that does not signal in any way NATO’s acceptance of its illegal aggression in Crimea and more broadly in Ukraine. Part of NATO’s capacity to adapt and to remain relevant must be its confidence and strength to both deter and to talk to Russia simultaneously. Without the former, Russia’s aggression is encouraged. Without the latter, both parties are subject to miscalculation and unintentional provocation. Both are necessary. Both are essential.

And finally, China. There is strategic logic in NATO seeking a relationship with China. It is time. China’s reach into the developing world is substantial and growing, making China a potential partner for the careful stabilization campaign already addressed. Not only should NATO explore the efficacy of a NATO/China Commission, which could grow from the areas of common interest such as countering radicalization, countering terrorism, and state-level capacity-building, NATO should even consider the creation of a special relationship with the SCO. All the points in this conclusion should be undertaken concurrently and comprehensively. And there will be costs associated with this approach, but the challenges of this era are so great that NATO has no alternative. A comprehensive NATO built on the strength of Atlantic Alliance carries with it unparalleled capacity not only to defend the Alliance, from without and within, in a period of growing uncertainty and instability, it also has the capacity to influence partners, nations, and events beyond its traditional ken, thereby positioning NATO as one of the principal proponents of peace and stability in this new, but violent and dangerous century.25

25 GLOBSEC NATO Adaptation Initiative envisages a series of policy papers which will address the nature of NATO adaptation and the challenges it must overcome if it is to remain a viable and credible alliance for the peace and stability in the transatlantic area. So far following policy papers have been published: GLOBSEC NATO Adaptation Project- NATO in a Changing Strategic Environment; One NATO- The Political Adaptation of the Alliance; The Military Adaptation of the Alliance; Ten Messages for Affording and Equipping the Adapted Alliance; Reanimating NATO’s Warfighting Mindset- Eight Steps to Increase the Alliance’s Political-Military Agility; Integrated Deterrence- NATO’s ‘First Reset’ Strategy and Comprehensive NATO. Following paragraph contains Conclusions presented in policy paper Comprehensive NATO explaining the difference between “contained” versus “comprehensive.”
5. Excerpt from the Report – A New Era of NATO EU Cooperation: How to Make the Best of a Marriage of Necessity

In the 2010s, the EU and NATO have faced growing problems and threats to their east and south borders, as well as a series of security challenges not defined by geography, such as the migration crisis and terrorism, and facing serious internal challenges, such as the rise of Eurosceptic perspective and populist parties ready to implement undemocratic solutions, that shook the core of both organizations and their values. Both EU and NATO have taken the steps at the two most recent NATO Summits, in Wales 2014 and Warsaw 2016, to address this situation, especially with regard to military defense.

In Wales 2014, after years of claims to cut in defense spending, NATO Member States recognized the need and threat coming with new challenges – Ukraine conflict, refugee crisis, and made a strong call for reverse cuts. Additional measures were implemented for Baltic countries, and expanded Article 5 to apply to cyberattacks. At Warsaw summit, the set of measures were strengthen, primarily in the case of Baltic states and Poland, with new armed forces in this area, and NATO’s role in countering hybrid warfare was further strategized.

At the same time, EU focus significantly shifted from playing a role in external crisis management to strengthening Europe’s own security. The EU’s Global Strategy 2016 is focused on Europe’s capability to deter, respond to and protect Union and Europe from external threats. EU remained focused on civilian missions, however, including the establishment of military headquarters for military operations in late 2016. The second focus was strengthening of the resilience of non-EU partners, and makes them more capable to respond to threats and crisis. Finally, EU has placed more focus on protection instead of defense, including thereby more issues as threats and developing strategies to respond to them. However, after June 2016 and Brexit, it has been an understandable judgment by many an
Yet, at the same time, both EU and NATO showed great commitment and political will to tackle the key security issues and to find common solutions, from resolving old issues (Cyprus-Turkey) to new emerging threats - countering hybrid threats and developing European defense capabilities. Both organizations recognized the need to develop mechanisms and procedures for shared strategic and situational awareness, primarily in order to gather intelligence among the Member States of the EU and NATO, which includes early warning of emerging situations and improvement of general situational awareness.

Yet, at the same time, both EU and NATO showed great commitment and political will to tackle the key security issues and to find common solutions, from resolving old issues (Cyprus-Turkey) to new emerging threats - countering hybrid threats and developing European defense capabilities. Both organizations recognized the need to develop mechanisms and procedures for shared strategic and situational awareness, primarily in order to gather intelligence among the Member States of the EU and NATO, which includes early warning of emerging situations and improvement of general situational awareness. EU and NATO recognize the need to strengthen the civil preparedness of their Member States, which includes the condition of the Member States’ basic infrastructure, as well as an examination of their societal resilience, in order to develop coordinated response to hybrid threats - a major destabilization activity that would not be classified as warfare, and would therefore not lead to the activation of the contractual commitments of the NATO and EU. That is why NATO decided to expand Article 5 in order to apply to extensive, malicious cyber-attacks at the Wales Summit in 2014. Finally, both the EU and NATO recognized the need to strengthen Europe’s defense capacity. Clearly, there is a new political momentum and clear awareness, both in the EU and NATO to cooperate, because collective efforts are needed for taking common collective steps together.

Although NATO and the EU have been the closest allies, only the Warsaw Joint Declaration of July 8, 2016 raised the EU-NATO relationship to a new level, following the BREXIT decision on UK leaving the EU. The Joint Declaration concerns cyberspace which has become a centerpiece of NATO-EU cooperation recently and is scoped between countering cyber threats, building resilience, to disinformation campaigns and

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Excerpt from the Report – A New Era of NATO EU Cooperation: How to Make the Best of a Marriage of Necessity

crises triggered by hybrid attacks. The capacity for internal defense against the increasing cyber warfare assaults taking place on critical civilian infrastructures or financial and commercial networks proved to be essential and needs to be significantly improved in NATO countries and Europe as a whole. More importantly, both NATO and the EU recognized the need to address explicit and concealed efforts to interfere in the democratic institutions and electoral processes of the Member States by outside actors. At the same time, the rise of extremist terrorism in Europe, traditionally more in the domain of law enforcement blurs the line between the police and armed forces. Both EU and NATO are now facing hybrid warfare, used by ‘state or non-state actors able to strike directly inside Europe without scratching the external frontier’, and yet still powerful enough to make enormous economic and human damage, as ISIS attacks on the heart of Europe, Paris 2015 perfectly showed.

The second tier of NATO-EU partnership, a division of responsibilities is already happening in joint small-scale, flexible missions that mix military presence with civilian assistance, where EU cannot match NATO’s resources and capabilities for large-scale operations in hostile environments, in training and interoperability, but at the same time, where EU can take the lead and contribute to the pacification and democratization of the region, such as Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa.

New challenges brought the European defense back on the agenda, especially in connection to the third component of the NATO-EU relationship; the “burden sharing” stumbling block. The Trump administration has insisted on defense spending of European allies and compromise needs to be found in relation to this issue. As stated in GLOBSEC report, the Trump administration has announced a 10% increase for the Pentagon budget, and it is expected that China and India, will follow with their increase of defense spending, leaving Europe of becoming ‘a military dwarf among world powers’.
6. **A Brief Overview of the Current Political Situation in the Western Balkans**

Since the end of the armed conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, the countries of the Western Balkans have experienced many problems and developed serious weaknesses, including system errors embedded in constitutional framework that politicize ethnicities (Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Montenegro), complex and vaguely drafted internal and international agreements that bind them (Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Serbia), longstanding disputes with their neighbors (Macedonia), unresolved legacies of atrocities committed during the wars and incomplete implementation of the transitional justice processes (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Croatia).

At the time of publication, only Croatia is a member of both the EU and NATO. Albania is a member of NATO, and Montenegro became a member on June 6, 2017. Other countries have varying degrees of cooperation with the Alliance. For example, Serbia participates in IPAP; Bosnia and Herzegovina has issues with implementation of MAP, while Macedonia has recently jumpstarted again its EU and NATO integration processes. Kosovo, due to its status issue, has to be looked at as a separate case.

When evaluating the most significant obstacles to the process of democratization and the consolidation of democracy in the Western Balkans, the political West usually emphasizes the region’s poor governance, high level of corruption, weak economies, and poor infrastructure. In addition to these obstacles, organized crime remains an critical challenge to regional governments.

Constitutional arrangements that force ethnicities to become political entities are still seen as a positive outcome of the political West’s efforts to stabilize the region in severe circumstances, and therefore have not been properly addressed in the current peaceful period. Complex constitutional arrangements and status issues complicate security sectors reforms.

The EU is an important actor in this regard, as it formally consolidates the West through its enlargement policy. The accession process does not provide explicit requirements for the security sector, as it does for other areas of negotiation. Security sector reforms are not prioritized and are conducted under the auspices of several actors, which do not always operate in sync. NATO played a key role in security sector reforms in countries that joined NATO, including Croatia, Albania, and Montenegro.

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27 For the purpose of this report, the Western Balkans countries are considered to be: Albania, Kosovo, Bosna and Hercegovina, Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Montenegro.
International and domestic judicial mechanisms of transitional justice in countries that participated in the wars of the 1990s contribute to security sector reforms by providing a legal framework for the replacement of persons suspected of participating in war crimes among other things. However, these processes have fallen from the radar of the political West after key persons were arrested and transferred to the ICTY. The newly established Kosovo Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutor’s Office for war crimes committed by the Kosovo Liberation Army between 1998 and 2000 is already viewed as a political tool to be used against Kosovo’s leaders.

Overall, the number of completed cases and the number of new indictments is significantly smaller than the number of atrocities committed, and in stark contrast with the number of victims. The majority of perpetrators, therefore, are still at large. Many still operate as part of the region’s security sectors or hold other public offices. They have no interest in supporting regional integration and cooperation with the political West, as it still, at least formally, professes to support trials in domestic and international courts.

Since the beginning of the migration crisis in 2015, the political West has mainly viewed the Western Balkans in the context of migrant and refugee issues, including routes to Western Europe and Islamic radicalization. However, for Serbia, the focus has also been on the process of the normalization of relations with Kosovo through the implementation of Brussels agreement. With these topics as their priorities, the political West, and EU in particular, have been willing to turn a blind eye to many other setbacks in the region, so long as cooperation on migration, countering terrorism, and normalizing relations with Kosovo produce some visible, if not actual, results.

Until recently, the previously mentioned challenges have been seen as obstacles to internal reforms, regional cooperation, and the region’s integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. However, they are also avenues for others outside influences as CEAS has presented in its report *Eyes Wide Shut: The Strengthening of Russian Soft Power in Serbia – Goals, Instruments, and Effects*.28

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7. NATO and the Western Balkans: A Short Overview

NATO’s open door policy has been its priority since the early 1990s following the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw pact, and despite Balkan wars of 1991-2001. NATO enlargement and EU integration have been crucial factors in stabilizing tensions and conflicts in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe. Both organizations were fundamental in supporting the region’s transition from conflict, establishing rule of law, and developing of market economies. Joining NATO and implementing the reforms it requires led to EU membership for some countries in the Western Balkans. Montenegro’s accession to NATO is a clear example in which more stability was achieved, despite Russian attempts otherwise. The Western Balkans today are a special concern for NATO, according a draft report by NATO’s Economics and Security Committee, titled, “Economic Transition in the Western Balkans: An Assessment.” NATO has a military presence in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, maintains headquarters in Sarajevo and Skopje, and has a Military Liaison Office in Belgrade. NATO has been leading a peace-support operation in Kosovo since June 1999 in support of wider international efforts to build peace and stability in the area. KFOR was established when NATO’s 78-day air campaign against Milosevic’s regime, aimed at putting an end to violence in Kosovo, was over and the operation derives its mandate from United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) and the Military-Technical Agreement between NATO, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Serbia. Today, KFOR consists of approximately 4,500 troops provided by 31 countries. It continues to help maintain a safe and secure environment and freedom of movement for all people and communities in Kosovo. Command and structure of KFOR consists of the Multinational Battle Groups (MNBG) which are military units at the level of a battalion, consisting of numerous companies. These companies are highly mobile, flexible and rapidly deployable to potential trouble spots all over Kosovo. NATO conducted its first major crisis response operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995. The NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR) was deployed in December 1995 to implement the military aspects of the Dayton Peace Agreement and was replaced a year later by the NATO-led Stabilization Force (SFOR). SFOR helped to maintain a secure environment and facilitate the country’s reconstruction in the wake of the 1992-1995 war. SFOR lead the operation Joint Guard from December 1996 to June 1998. Following the hand-over to SFOR in December 1996, the command structure, as directed by the North Atlantic Council (NAC), was broadened to include a deputy SFOR commander, a deputy operational commander and divisional commanders.


at the head of each MNTF (1,800 - 2,000 troops). This structure comprised 300 staff at HQSFOR at Camp Butmir in Sarajevo, led by the Commander of SFOR (COMSFOR) and three Multi-National Task Forces (MNTFs). In 2002, the number of troops was reduced to 12,000 soldiers, then two years later (2004) to just 7,000. SFOR was succeeded by European Union Force Althea (EUFOR) in 2004. EUFOR has 2,503 troops from 27 countries, mostly from the countries of the European Union.

Several countries in the region, however, remain outside of both NATO and the EU. Two of these, Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, are formal candidates for NATO, but are stalled in the process. NATO’s invitation to the Republic of Macedonia was blocked by Greece at the 2008 Bucharest summit when NATO nations agreed that the country would receive an invitation upon resolution of the Macedonia naming dispute. The new center-left government, which came to power in June 2017, sees NATO membership as a top priority. It hopes that Greece’s veto of its application under the U.N.-recognized name FYROM (the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) can be unlocked by a charm offensive towards Athens. Bosnia and Herzegovina is not working towards membership due to internal tensions. NATO considers Serbia a lukewarm NATO partner with no aspiration to be a candidate.

Although there will be no further accessions among the Western Balkan states in the near future, the region’s integration into NATO and the EU is still seen as an important process for addressing the consequences of recent conflicts, combatting anti-Western Russian influence in the region, and maintaining stability. Where membership is not a realistic option, NATO can still be beneficial by remaining committed to nurturing political and military ties with the states of the Western Balkans, contributing to the stability of the region and being firmly present in it.

31 Ibid.
8. The Berlin Process: A New Initiative for the Western Balkans

Regional cooperation and good neighborly relations are a pre-condition for EU accession and one of the strategies to address related challenges. The Berlin process, which was launched in August 2014, as the top-level initiative for economic development and political dialogue, is the latest initiative that brings together the leaders of the Western Balkans Six and several EU Member States in yearly summits. Its goal is to engage them in cooperation initiatives that would transform them and pave their way to the EU. The Berlin process was initiated for multiple reasons, from geopolitical to financial, including difficulties related to the enlargement process. When European Commission President, Jean-Claude Juncker, in 2014 announced a five-year halt on enlargement, the launch of the Berlin process was a way to confirm the EU’s continued commitment to the Western Balkans region’s accession and to give a new momentum to the enlargement process. In line with its long-standing support for enlargement, Germany initiated a political process complementary to the EU integration process, with the aim to provide a framework for closer regional cooperation in view of achieving sustainable economic growth, fully-fledged market democracy, and reconciliation. Five consecutive summits between 2014 and 2018 are to be organized. The participants in the process include the prime ministers of the six Western Balkan countries and ministers of foreign/economic affairs and officials from Germany, Austria, France, Italy, Slovenia and Croatia, all of which are EU Member States that have been actively involved in the region’s enlargement and have already hosted or will host summits; and representatives of the European Commission and international financial institutions.

The Berlin process started with the 2014 Conference of Western Balkan States, followed by the 2015 Vienna Summit, and the 2016 Paris Summit. A future conference is scheduled to be held in July 2017 in Trieste. From the Berlin summit, it was clearly stated that the common goal of the EU and the Western Balkan countries was to see them as parts of the EU. At the same time, regional cooperation within the Western Balkans has been an EU-promoted objective since 1996, when it was introduced as an element of the EU policies towards the region after the Dayton Peace Agreement. In 2005, the European Council reconfirmed that regional cooperation and good neighborly relations will remain essential elements of EU policy. The European Parliament also mentions the Berlin process in its 2016 resolutions on the individual countries, commending their constructive participation in the initiative and urging them to implement the technical standards and soft measures agreed. The topics that are covered with the Berlin process are rule of law and good governance, regional cooperation in the areas of infrastructure, connectivity, and youth. The initially outlined goals included strengthening regional cooperation, resolving outstanding bilateral questions in the interest of good neighborly relations and stability, strengthening good governance (by tackling corruption and organized
crime, carrying out further reforms for increased legal certainty, reinforced independence of the judiciary, and others) and increasing prosperity via sustainable economic growth (open markets, positive investment climate, increased competitiveness, developing further the Energy Community for southeast Europe, cooperation in the area of transport, as well as academic and vocational training). Infrastructure and energy interconnectivity, a more visible civil society and enhanced youth exchange are the key areas where these Western Balkans countries decided to engage more. At the end of May 2017, the “Berlin plus” agenda was announced by Sigmar Gabriel, German Minister of Foreign Affairs in Berlin. After several years of the Berlin process, a numerous programmed and initiatives have been launched, but the implementation’s speed is not following, while the funding is not easily accessible to those in need. “Berlin plus” will thus serve as the tool to fill in the gaps, and German cooperation and development tools will be better directed to the needs of the region. Special funds will be designated for start-up business, vocational training and IT-infrastructure development. Besides that, Gabriel proposed a fund for infrastructure and technology funded by EU Member States that would benefit connection of countries in the region. This “mini Marshall Plan” for the Balkans is expected to boost the region’s economies and to make up for the long wait for EU membership. The money for implementing the plan should be secured by, among others, the European Economic Area, consisting of all EU Member States, Iceland, Lichtenstein and Norway, as well as the European Free Trade Association, made up of the same group of countries and Switzerland. The Berlin process has not proven to be more than a framework for infrastructural cooperation for the countries of the Western Balkans. The process failed to address important political questions, and made little to no progress in the areas of transitional justice, despite small achievements in intergovernmental cooperation. The process has been evaluated as slow and deemed just another regional cooperation initiative.

2017 Western Balkans Summit in Trieste, the last summit of Berlin Process was held in Italy and gathered Heads of Government, Foreign Ministers, Ministers of Economy and Ministers of Transport of the Western Balkans together with their counterparts from sev-

“At this important summit hosted by Italy we first of all confirmed the perspective of the European Union integration of the Western Balkans. All the 6 partners in the Western Balkans clearly want to be more integrated in the EU, determined to have a future in our Union for all of them; once the right reforms are passed, we will be very consistent from our side. Secondly, many new practical projects were confirmed and a Transport Community Treaty was signed, opening new connections. So, practical steps and European perspective, a very successful summit.”

Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission
eral EU Member States and high-level EU representatives discussed key areas of regional cooperation, and set out concrete measures to better connect the region’s infrastructures, economies and people. The Western Balkans leaders agreed on an action plan to develop a Regional Economic Area to consolidate a market of some 20 million people, and so attract investment and generate growth and jobs. Objectives to be reached over the next years also include development of digital markets, smart growth, mobility of skilled workers and mutual recognition of professional qualifications in the region. The European Commission will support the implementation of this initiative with a package of €7 million for the improvement of the investment climate, smart specialization strategies and the Western Balkans Chamber Investment Forum. The Forum, which gathers local chambers of commerce, inaugurated its permanent secretariat, which will help put the Regional Economic Area into concrete opportunities for companies across the region. On support for the private sector, the European Commission announced €48 million of additional EU funding for the Western Balkans Enterprise Development and Innovation Facility (EDIF), which is expected to leverage some €250 million for the companies in the region.33

Following the Summit High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy /Vice-President of the Commission Federica Mogherini said: “At this important summit hosted by Italy we first of all confirmed the perspective of the European Union integration of the Western Balkans. All the 6 partners in the Western Balkans clearly want to be more integrated in the EU, determined to have a future in our Union for all of them; once the right reforms are passed, we will be very consistent from our side. Secondly, many new practical projects were confirmed and a Transport Community Treaty was signed, opening new connections. So, practical steps and European perspective, a very successful summit.”34

34 Ibid.
9. Serbia: Key Obstacles to Stabilization and Democratization

General Information and Short Background

Serbia’s total land area is 77,474 square kilometers and it has a current population of 7,041,599. The Serbian Armed Forces have 28,000 active personnel, with 120,000 of personnel in reserve. According to data from September 2016, the Ministry of Interior employs 42,817 persons; 14,551 are not in uniform, while 28,266 are uniformed police officers. In January 2017, the official unemployment rate was 14.6%.

Presidential elections in Serbia were held on April 2, 2017. Although the former President Nikolić had only served one term, the coalition surrounding the Serbian Progressive Party nominated Prime Minister Vučić for the role. He won the election with 54.9% of the vote, with Saša Janković coming in second a 16.2%. While many claimed that elections were held in the atmosphere of dictatorship, a CEAS analysis argued that while the elections deemed unfair by many observers, who claimed there were serious breaches of election rules, they were square. Serbian democratic opposition stood opposed to Vučić in a wide specter, including the extreme right party Dveri, the hard-core nationalist Vuk Jeremić, and the soft nationalist Saša Janković, and failed to offer any meaningful progressive alternative to Vučić and the “hypocritical” EU, as they put it.

Although Vučić claims to be the leader of Serbia’s alleged integration into the EU and is the key person to deliver on NATO’s interests in the Region, he is, at best, an autocrat. It is too often forgotten that Vučić was a prominent figure and one of the architects of Slobodan Milošević’s regime, infamously known for its war crimes. Despite this, the West and many genuine progressive figures in Serbia have attempted to grant him the status as a re-born democrat. Yet the Brussels-led agreement on Kosovo has hit a dead end, the macro financial stability of the country is on shaky ground, the situation of refugees and migration flows is dubious from a human rights perspective and Serbia’s ad hoc contribution to the war on terrorism has a huge blind spot for anything coming from Russia (or anything going from Serbia to Ukraine). The entire Region of the Western Balkans re-

36 Serbia Unemployment Rate. Trading Economics. Available at: https://tradingeconomics.com/serbia/unemployment-rate.
38 Ibid.
mains fertile ground for the politicization of ethnicity, poor governance, corruption and many other systemic errors.”

After the presidential election and inauguration of newly elected President Vučić, new Prime Minister was appointed on 29th June 2017.

The new Serbian Prime Minister, Ana Brnabić, could be characterized as a technocrat although without extensive experience like others, is not the first top-level official who has come to power in Serbia without even running for office. Previously, Aleksandar Vučić and Tomislav Nikolić, along with their Serbian Progressive Party came to power and Nikolić became President of Serbia in such a manner. The economic expert, Mirko Cvetković, who also did not participate directly in the election processes, served as Prime Minister on behalf of the Democratic Party.

At that time, the party’s head, Boris Tadić, served as President.

The current situation resembles those described above: namely that power in Serbia sometimes passes from the government to the president, even though the Serbian constitution and laws, which define the work of the government, stipulate that the government creates and leads Serbian politics.

Brnabić emerged in the Serbian political scene by assuming the post of Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government in the Vučić-led government in 2016. Prior to that, she was close to several private companies, the most relevant ones being those that deal with renewable energy. She also was engaged with the National Alliance for Local Economic Development-NALED, which was funded by the United States Agency for International Development and can be viewed as a local nongovernmental organization.

She proved to be loyal to current President Vučić as well as to private interests coming from the West, while defending Nikola Petrović, Vučić’s close subordinate in a corruption scandal, which was even mentioned by several United States congressmen. The public does not know much about her values, political affiliations, or ideas regarding contemporary global affairs and especially Serbia’s role in them.

Brnabić confused foreign and domestic policy on Serbian-Russian related issues, providing contrasting statements to different news outlets. In one Sputnik interview she
accentuated her patriotism. Additionally, on several occasions she repeated her respect for contemporary Russia. However, the ball is not in her, or even President Vučić’s, court these days. It is the EU that has to strike a consensus among its Member States to open negotiations on Chapter 31, the Common Security and Foreign Policy, for Serbia. This chapter will be a litmus test for the ruling structures’ real commitment to integration into the EU in the new strategic environment, which many to date have successfully obscured from the Serbian public.

Having voted for EU integration, Serbia legitimized EU and its Member States’ involvement in its internal affairs. The same does not apply for Russia. Unfortunately, a multi-speed Europe, in which the Western Balkans is outsourced to several Member States, via the Berlin Process, only adds to the downward spiral in public support for membership, amplified by the Serbian cabinet ministers, president, and prime minister and their media’s negative campaign. Additionally, the EU and its Member States have been reluctant to pressure Serbia regarding its relations with Russia, in a weak attempt to avoid provoking Russia or Vučić further.

Added to this is Russia’s non-democratic influence, which in contrast to the rest of Europe, is welcomed with open doors in Serbia. This trend is driven by genuinely anti-West forces, many of which are in the ruling party. It can also be used by foreign actors to push Serbia off of its path toward the EU, which would have dangerous internal and external consequences.

**Security System Structures**

The national security system in a broader sense comprises the highest legislative, executive, and judicial authorities: the national assembly, the president, the national security council, the government, the courts and the prosecutor’s office. In a more narrow sense, the national security system consists of: the defense system, the ministry of interior’s forces, the security-intelligence system, and the temporary bodies assembled in the event of a crisis. The national security system is under democratic and civilian control, implemented by the national assembly, the president, the government, the national security council, other state authorities, and the public, in accordance with the law.  

The defense system is a unique, structurally-arranged set of forces and defense elements which protects the interests of the Republic of Serbia from the external armed threats.

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The Armed Forces of Serbia are the primary element of the defense system. The ministry of interior’s forces are part of the national security system, which protects national interests. The police is the fundamental force of the ministry of interior. The security-intelligence system is a functionally integrated subsystem of the national security of the Republic of Serbia, which consists of the Security-Information Agency, the Military Security Agency, and the Military Intelligence Agency. Their competence, scope of work, authority, duties, mutual relations, and cooperation, as well as the democratic and civilian control of their work, are regulated by law. The harmonization of the activities of the security services is performed by the Coordination Bureau.

Incomplete Security Sector Reform: Key Vulnerabilities for Serbia

The security sector constitutes an important component of any country’s governmental structure as it is responsible for regulating the monopoly the state maintains over the legitimate use of force. The democratic alignment of the security sector is one of the most important prerequisites for any democratically organized country. Because of this, security sector reform is a key element of the democratic transformation of authoritarian countries, which includes also post-socialist countries, following the end of the Cold War. This is especially true for the countries of the former Yugoslavia, where the socialist era was succeeded by an era of warfare in the beginning of 1990s.

This period witnessed a substantial erosion of the monopoly on the use of force as the result of the violent division of society along ethnic lines. Serbia, as one of the countries involved, began the process of security sector reform after 2000 under complex socio-political circumstances, which largely shaped and defined the scope and effects of such reforms implemented since then. This explains why Serbia entered the final phase of the EU integration process, accession negotiations, in January 2014 with an incomplete and unsatisfactory record of security sector reform.

Assuming a successful conclusion to the negotiation process, the expectation is that Serbia will be accepted into the EU as a new Member State and, as defined by the Copenhagen Criteria, as an established democratic country with a functional market economy with its national legislation confirmed to the EU acquis. By any definition, this would

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40 Serbian Armed Forces. Available at: [http://www.vs.rs/index.php](http://www.vs.rs/index.php).
imply that the security sector in Serbia has reached a democratically-aligned and functional level at which it can ensure a stable democratic order. To reach this level will require that security sector reform be addressed as a priority in the period leading up to accession into the EU. In its history of enlargement policy, the EU has not paid particular attention to security sector reform. This was the case because candidate countries had conducted such reform either within the framework of requirements for accession to NATO or successfully on their own before acceptance as an EU Member State. Serbia, however, is an exceptional case in this regard and will require that the EU take a firm stance on this issue and play a more proactive role as an external promoter of security sector reform.43

The main reasons why a different and more robust approach by the European Union is needed in the case of Serbia are as follows. “First, Serbia made a declaration of military neutrality in 2007. This declaration was taken in a non-democratic manner without serious public debate and solely in reaction to the declaration of independence by Kosovo. As such, the concept for this move was not developed in sync with Serbia’s most important strategic documents as would be expected. Moreover, the theoretical basis for the declaration of neutrality is weak and inconsistent as is evident in the reaction of the Serbian government to the sharpened relations between the West and Russia in the context of the Ukrainian crisis. These deficiencies could have a negative impact on the successful completion of reforms in the security sector.

Second, as a consequence of its declaration of military neutrality, Serbia is excluded from the possibility of seeking membership in NATO. In any event, Serbia has not indicated such an interest and as a corollary its cooperation with NATO has been limited. This greatly diminishes the role of a key external actor in promoting security sector reform which the Alliance has assumed in the case of nearly all previous candidates for EU membership. This deficiency cannot be compensated for by Western countries that maintain bilateral military cooperation with Serbia – cooperation that is only voluntary, although Serbia has agreed Individual Partnership Action Plan with NATO in 2015. This leaves the EU as the only external actor in Serbia capable of exerting pressure on the authorities to undertake meaningful security sector reform through its policy of conditionality.

Third, continuation of the dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo should lead to a complete normalization and institutionalization of relations prior to Serbia’s accession to the EU, and later to Kosovo joining the EU – and with that the once primary reason for the declaration of military neutrality is negated. The security sector therefore represents an

area in which the accession process as defined by the EU Negotiating Framework and the most important strategic objectives defined in state documents of Serbia (defense of the territorial integrity of the country, including the territory of Kosovo) collide.

Fourth, Serbia still does not have all necessary Foreign and Defence Strategic Policy Documents adopted. It has an outdated and non-applicable National Security Strategy (adopted in 2009) that is not in accordance with actual Security Threats as for example Hybrid Threats, Cyber Warfare and wider geopolitical situation. Existing National Security Strategy was adopted in 2009 before the adaptation of Lisbon (which introduces mandatory clause of collective solidarity) and Brussels Agreement (which refers to the process of normalization of relations with Kosovo) and harmonization of Individual Partnership Action Plan with NATO, as non-compliance with the current Serbian Security and Foreign policy with the Global strategy of foreign and security policy of the EU that represents one of the key problems facing Serbia on this issue. Similar to the case of proclaimed military neutrality, the Strategy was adopted in a very non-transparent manner, in ad hoc procedures in which members of parliament were not given much of a chance (and, in any event, don’t have the will and knowledge) to comment, and without any expert or public debate that should precede such a move. Although the parameters of national security are broader than defense, the entire process of drafting the National Security Strategy in public institutions was led by the Ministry of Defense. The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia makes no mention at all of Serbia’s military neutrality. On the other hand, it does mention the former European Security Defense Policy and points out that ‘Serbia is prepared to build the capacities and capabilities of its national defense system in accordance with the standards and obligations under the European Security Defense Policy.”

Negative trends continued with the current draft of the National Security Strategy. Reports on the screening for Chapter 31, which is related to the common foreign and secu-

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Ibid.
Negative trends continued with the current draft of the National Security Strategy. Reports on the screening for Chapter 31, which is related to the common foreign and security policy, are still missing. In addition, the professional class still strongly advocates for the creation of a new National Security Strategy with extensive public debate as a condition within this Chapter. The general public knows a little or nothing about this process. President Vučić announced during an appearance on the television show Ćirilica that the Strategy will be adopted at the end of 2016 or the beginning of 2017. In February 2017 the Ministry of Defense announced that a meeting of the intersectional working group drafting the National Security Strategy, Defense Strategy, and White Book of Defence was held in Belgrade. The working group consists of representatives of the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior, Office of the Council for National Security and Protection of Classified Information, and Negotiating Team for Serbia’s accession to the EU. The only message that was published after this meeting was one in which Minister of Defence Zoran Đorđević stated that the preparation of these documents is important and essential and should take into account Serbia’s commitment EU membership status and military neutrality. The public is still unaware of the process of drafting the strategic documents, which occurs behind a closed doors and without a constructive dialogue with the expert community and other relevant actors.

45 Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić for TV Happy. TV show Ćirilica. March 2016. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qkP-OXV_EEA.

In preparation for Serbia’s development of a fully efficient and functional security sector reform, the EU and other Western allies should define security sector reform as an important aspect of the integration policy towards Serbia in the accession process. Security sector reform is facing severe problems, including failure to comply with obligations envisaged by the Individual Partnership Action Plan with NATO, lack of a National Security Strategy, Defense Strategy, and the White Book of Defense, failure to implement transitional justice mechanisms in this area, and the undetermined status of the Russian Humanitarian Centre.

In the last five years, which corresponds with President Vučić’s reign, Serbia has been subjected to a perfect storm. A synergy has been created between direct Russian and domestic anti–democratic and anti–EU interests, in a period when the EU faces many complicated challenges. Elements of the ruling structure in Serbia do not really want European integration, in part due to their essentially authoritarian nature, and in part out of fear of losing income from corruption, monopolies created from state and public companies, and control of the security system and judiciary system. Integration into the EU would hinder, if not abolish altogether, these sources of influence and income. In addition, some in the security system and state structures view the integration process as a danger, as it may lead to the continuation or extension of war crimes trials. In Serbia, these particular interests are protected by promising the political West and domestic voters that there is an intention of integration into the EU. This brings international support and votes for the idea of more investments and generally better standards of living. However, these same politicians promise to never impose sanctions on Russia, which they view as the key foreign policy partner.

In March 2016, Ombudsman Saša Janković submitted to the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia the Annual report of the Ombudsman for 2015, which confirmed the trends of strengthening authoritarianism and disruption of institutions, through disrespect for the rule of law. The most notable example is the refusal of state institutions to act upon the recommendations of the Ombudsman addressed to the competent authorities to penalize the Minister of Defense and Director of the Military Security Agency for their responsibility for the illegal and irregular work of the organs in connection with the incidents during the 2014 pride parade.
An alarming situation was also presented by the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection, Rodoljub Šabić, in his annual report on the implementation of the law on free access to information of public importance and law on personal data protection for 2015, which was submitted to parliament in April 2016. The report points to the fact that Serbia, when it comes to the protection of personal data, is practically at the beginning of the process of implementing European standards in the legal system and in practice. It is necessary to improve and quicken the pace of this process.

Although Serbia has made some improvements in security sector reform, there are still many issues, particularly those related to security and intelligence services. According to the latest research by the Belgrade Center for Security Policy, in 2006 Serbia had the opportunity to tailor the security sector to its own needs. However, contrary to the expectations of the professional and general public, a comprehensive reform of the security sector, including security services, was never carried out. Similar to what happened after the October 5, 2000 changes, a partial reform of the security services and the security-intelligence sector was guided by the desire and ambition of the most powerful political leaders to control the operation of security services, while some legal modifications had to be made as a result of Serbian Constitutional Court decisions. Consequently, security services have still not become a part of a single security-intelligence system, the legal framework regulating their operation has not been harmonized and abounds in loopholes and the oversight and control of security services is ineffective and is not conducive to accountability for their management and the management of their operation. In other words, they are tailored to the needs of politicians, rather than the security interests and needs of the Serbian society and citizens.  

Serbia faces an important period in the EU integration process involving the adoption of new doctrinal and strategic documents. Unfortunately, there is already a trend in the adoption of new laws and regulations, such as the law on the security information agency, beyond the statutory procedure and without public, academic, and expert debate. Amendments to the law on security information agency,\(^\text{48}\) which oversees that the act on systematization and job settlement and will be brought by the director of the agency with the prior approval of the government, are currently in the parliament. In this stage, the law fill undergo some of the biggest changes. Amendments to the law were urgently introduced to parliament, which only represents an attempt to adopt these changes in a nontransparent manner, without an open public debate.

### Serbia’s Open Door Policy and the Growth of Russian Authoritarian Internationalism

As fully elaborated in CEAS publication *Eyes wide shut – Strengthening of Russian Soft Power in Serbia – goals, instruments and effects*,\(^\text{49}\) published in May 2016, undemocratic trends in Kremlin activities are realized through the use of Russian soft power in Serbia. Rather than resistance, the Kremlin has found the doors of Serbian authorities wide open. Similar methods of operation by the Kremlin can be seen in EU Member States, as well as in the more distant neighbors of the Russian Federation. The objectives and effects of Kremlin activity, as well as manners of preventing and remedying them have been topics of discussion in the West and elsewhere over the past several years. In contrast to this, in Serbia, which is, due to various circumstances, very fertile ground for Kremlin activities, this topic has not been given adequate attention, even among democratically-minded individuals and structures.

\(^\text{48}\) The law that strengthens the authority of the BIA director arrived in Assembly procedure. N1. August 2017. Available at: [http://rs.n1info.com/a314518/Vesti/Vesti/Zakon-o-BIA-stigao-u-Skupstinu.html](http://rs.n1info.com/a314518/Vesti/Vesti/Zakon-o-BIA-stigao-u-Skupstinu.html).

\(^\text{49}\) CEAS Study -Eyes wide shut – Strengthening of Russian Soft Power in Serbia– goals, instruments and effects. May 2016. Available at: [https://www.ceas-serbia.org/images/publikacije/CEAS_Studija_-_C5%A0irom_zatvorenih_o%C4%8Diju_ENG.pdf](https://www.ceas-serbia.org/images/publikacije/CEAS_Studija_-_C5%A0irom_zatvorenih_o%C4%8Diju_ENG.pdf).
The more the official Belgrade government flirts with the Kremlin, the more the political West lowers its standards in the hopes of attracting Serbia into its orbit. The increasingly autocratic official Belgrade government has been intentionally abusing this pacification and lack of adequate response from the West. This leaves the doors wide open to the growing influence of the Kremlin’s soft power, which shares several goals with the growing autocracy in Belgrade.

Generally, the increased interest of the Russian Federation in the Western Balkans, including Serbia, parallels Russian preparations to respond to developments with Euromaidan in Kiev, the war in eastern Ukraine, and the annexation of Crimea. Through the research that CEAS conducted in 2016, 109 organizations that promote different aspects of Serbian–Russian relations, which are not necessarily harmful to Serbia by themselves, were mapped. Of these, there are: 10 organizations of Russian compatriots, 21 associations of citizens, 6 student organizations, 16 movements with political action, 14 political parties, 8 internet portals, 2 Russian organizations that have offices in Serbia, 16 pro–Kremlin media sources, 6 Russian media sources, 3 Russian foundations, and 5 cultural and educational institutions, as well as 2 internet portals of unknown ownership.

There is a noticeable, increasing trend in the number of organizations that advocate for the direct cooperation of Serbia with Russia, and the abandonment of the proclaimed path of Serbia towards the European Union. They have gained an unusual reputation, disproportionately large media space, and are slowly but surely become a “legitimate other party” in public debate. The number of their activities in Serbia increased drastically in 2015 when it became clear that Serbia would begin formal negotiations with the EU, and when the intention of stronger cooperation with NATO within the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) was disclosed.

In addition to the devaluation of democratic procedures and denying support to European integration, the particular priorities of Russian soft power in Serbia and the Region involve slowing down or stopping the process of normalizing relations between Belgrade and Pristina, as well as the complete relativization and suspension of the process of transitional justice.

The issue of NATO enlargement in the Balkans, and especially the question of relations between Serbia and NATO, is both the goal and the means of Russian soft power in the Region. By means of frantic propaganda and the defamation of the protagonists of this

“Earlier it was claimed that Russia had only two allies - the army and the fleet. However, it is not so, Serbian people must be added. It is precisely this unconditional love which can’t be crushed and which will persevere against all challenges. It is precisely this historical phenomenon that Russia in no case has the right to ignore and which must be protected.”

Anja Filimonova, editor-in-chief, Fund of Strategic Culture
The issue of NATO enlargement in the Balkans, and especially the question of relations between Serbia and NATO, is both the goal and the means of Russian soft power in the Region. By means of frantic propaganda and the defamation of the protagonists of this policy, Russian soft power seeks to prevent the relationship between Serbia and NATO from being discussed on a rational basis, such as on assessments of security threats and challenges to which Serbia is exposed, and options for an individual response or entering functional partnerships that truly act as a political–military alliance with command structure, equipment, procedures, and standards.

The Western international community should stop, as soon as possible, lowering the standards and expectations in the processes of integration and cooperation with the countries of the Western Balkans, and must simultaneously intensify assistance, instead of increasingly slacking in its duties in the implementation of these processes. It must remain committed to its principles and promises concerning the possibility of realizing full membership in the EU and NATO if the candidate countries should meet the necessary requirements, regardless of the new geopolitical trends and challenges it is facing. It is necessary to invest more resources in the Western Balkans, as is already the case in the more stable political West, and especially in Serbia, due to the special circumstances that Moscow counts on, for the purpose of prevention and reduction of all negative effects of the penetration of Russian soft power and other forms of action by the official Moscow government. It would also be good to encourage a debate in the Region on the internal and external threats to liberal democracies, with a reminder of their basic principles and achievements, which are being increasingly devalued or taken for granted.

In the meantime pro-government media and tabloids continue to acknowledge Sputnik as a reliable source of information and the rhetoric of some of the Ministers of Serbian government appear to be even more severe than the one of Sputnik while the discrediting of political opponents (and mainly opposition) and CSO’s in Serbia are still in high level and modus operandi for Serbian authorities.

In December 2016, a high official from the United Russia party, Sergey Zeleznyak, gave an interview for the portal Russian Word, stating that Russia will support the formation of an alliance (Plan B4) of militarily neutral sovereign states in the Balkans, which would
include Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.50 “We are ready for a constructive and comprehensive cooperation aimed at providing support to the neutral and out of any block status of Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the development of the topic of the military neutrality of the ‘Balkan Quartet’ on the international political scene” Zeleznyak stated. He also commented that EU is pressing Serbia and Montenegro to join NATO as a part of their integration path and that it represent a “violent imposition” of unacceptable steps directed at joining the NATO military bloc, “although NATO is an aggressor for them.”51 This project of advocacy for neutral countries has been unnoticed by even great experts on the influence of Russia in Europe, such as Coordinator of the Center for European Security at the Institute for International Relations, Mark Galeotti who in an interview for Radio Free Europe52 stated the conclusion that Russia’s main target in Balkans is Serbia. He further stated that for now, Russia has no single strategy for the Balkans which is untrue considering the existence of B4 plan and continued interference of Russia in internal politics of all four countries with the promotion of this plan, even so after the Montenegro’s accession to NATO.

Chronology of Bilateral Relations between Serbia and the Russian Federation from 2015 to 2017

In 2015, there were as many as 12 bilateral meetings between Serbian and Russian officials. Russian officials included in the sanctions were among the members of the delegations visiting Serbia.

In May 2015, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov paid an official visit to Serbia. On that occasion, he met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić, and President Tomislav Nikolić. In June 2015, Serbia was visited by the Chairman of the Committee for International Affairs of the State Duma of the Russian Federation Alexei Pushkov, despite the fact that he is

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51 Ibid.
52 Galeotti: Serbia is the most important for the Moscow agenda in the Balkans. Radio Free Europe. September 2017. Available at: https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/intervju-mark-galeotti/28726120.html.
In 2016, representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia held more than 15 bilateral meetings with representatives of the Russian Federation, which is a growing trend in Serbian foreign policy.

In October 2015, Prime Minister Vučić led a political-economic delegation in a three-day visit to Moscow. On that occasion, Vučić met with Prime Minister Medvedev and President Putin. In Moscow, the Serbian Prime Minister said, “Serbia and Russia can develop trade relations in even greater percentages. We can do so much more to improve political cooperation. Russia always appears as one of the three most important trade partners of the Republic of Serbia. We think that there is much room for improvement of our cooperation in the field of construction, agriculture, and industry of course, as well as dedicated industry. There are many agreements we can reach.” This visit resulted in the signing of as many as 10 agreements, of which the two most important were the Agreement on Military-Technical Cooperation, and the Agreement on the Expansion of the Capacity of Gas Storage Banatski Dvor.

In 2016, representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia held more than 15 bilateral meetings with representatives of the Russian Federation, which is a growing trend in Serbian foreign policy.53

On January 12, 2016 Minister of Foreign Affairs Dačić met with Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Dmitry Rogozin, who was on a visit to Belgrade to attend the Serbia-Russia Intergovernmental Committee on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation. This visit led to signing the Protocol on the Fulfilment of the Phytosanitary Requirements Concerning Mutual Delivery of Goods with High Phytosanitary Risk. At a joint press conference following the meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee, Minister Dačić and Deputy Prime Minister Rogozin agreed that Serbia and Russia had to boost their economic cooperation, specifying that agriculture, civil engineering, and energy carried the greatest potential in this respect. Minister Dačić stated that membership in

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53 The following section was prepared based on the internet presentation of the Ministry of foreign affairs of the Republic of Serbia. Available at: [http://www.mfa.gov.rs/en/](http://www.mfa.gov.rs/en/).
the EU was Serbia’s main goal, but that Serbia did not ask Russia to defend it in military terms, while the aim of the military and technical cooperation with Russia was to create conditions for self-defense, if need be. Rogozin said that Russia opposed the militarization of the Balkans and that it did not wish the 1990s ever to recur in the Balkan Region. The Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation confirmed that Russia received a list from the Serbian Ministry of Defence containing the needs of the Serbian Armed Forces, stressing that the document would be thoroughly examined by the Russian side. Rogozin added that the specificities were to be discussed by the top-level Military and Technical Committee to be created by Serbia and Russia by the end of February 2016.

Dačić and Rogozin also discussed economic issues, tourism, construction, and the auto industry, as well as agriculture during a meeting in Moscow held in April 2016. On this occasion, Rogozin said that Russia sought to enhance the cooperation with Serbia at all levels and stressed the importance of the Serbian-Russian Humanitarian Centre in Niš. “The Centre in Niš is a humanitarian centre and has nothing to do with defense matters. And now that the possibility of a large-scale demining operation of Palmyra in Syria has been raised, I see a great possibility for the Niš Centre, but it has not been formalized yet. We think that signing of the agreement on the status of its associates should be accelerated, so that it could start functioning for what it was founded for,” Rogozin said.

During the visit Dačić also met with Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu, with whom he discussed military-technical cooperation, training of military personnel in Russia and the procurement of Russian arms. During this visit Dačić met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Lavrov. Lavrov said that he, “sees nothing unusual” in the recently ratified and signed NATO-Serbia agreement, while Dačić stated that the issue of NATO membership was not being raised in Serbia, and that the Serbian people did not want it, adding that Serbia had opted for military neutrality, and that when it came to its cooperation with the Alliance, it would remain at the level of the Partnership for Peace Programmed.

President Nikolić was in Moscow in early March 2016. On that occasion, Nikolić said that, “militarily neutral countries must balance and it follows from this that, what has been signed with one party, should be signed also with the others, without accession and entering into any military alliances,” referring to the Serbian-Russian Humanitarian Center in Niš. Nikolić argued that the agreement is similar to that between the government of the Republic of Serbia and the NATO Support and Procurement Organization on cooperation in the field of logistic support. However, this issue was delayed, reportedly due to the fact that early parliamentary elections were called in Serbia, and the government in the technical mandate cannot decide on these issues. During the visit, President Nikolić thanked Putin for blocking the resolution on Srebrenica to the United Nations Security Council and preventing Kosovo’s entry into the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.

On October 18, 2016, acting Assistant Minister for Security Policy Branimir Filipović held a round of consultations with Ambassador Ilya Rogachev, Director of the Department for New Challenges and Threats at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian
Federation. The topic of the consultations were issues concerning the security situation in certain regions, combating terrorism and all forms of extremism and radicalization, and also exchanged views on other topics related to current security challenges which could affect regional, European and global peace and stability. The consultations between Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia and Russia in the field of security policy have been carried out on a regular basis, according to the previously agreed ten-year plan on political consultations between the two countries.

On October 26, Dačić met Russian Federation Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev, who was visiting Serbia. The talks between the Serbian Foreign Minister and Nikolai Patrushev focused on the relations between the two countries in the security area, and the possibilities for upgrading them. They agreed that it was necessary to further improve cooperation with Russia's security services. Pro-Russian media described the meeting and the visit of Patrushev as usual and scheduled visit, while the Komersant stated that the true goal of his visit was to prevent a scandal regarding the Russian security service officials suspected for the Montenegro coup attempt.

Serbia-Russia Intergovernmental Committee on Trade, Economic, and Scientific/Technical Cooperation was held in Suzdal, Russian on November 2 and 3, 2016. Dačić repeated his gratitude to Rogozin and Russian for the support in international organizations with regard to Serbia’s territorial integrity and the issue of Kosovo and Metohija. He repeated that Serbia will not align with any sanctions against Russia regardless of who imposed them. He also stated that, “since Serbia already has free trade agreements with several Eurasian Union member countries, our intention is to sign a unified free trade agreement with the Eurasian Union as a whole, applicable on the entire territory of the Union, as a kind of unification, and will make an effort to accomplish this goal as soon as possible.”

On December 12, 2016 Lavrov visited Serbia. Dačić pointed out that one of the reasons for Lavrov’s visit was Serbia’s request for a grant in aircraft and military equipment from Russia.

During Prime Minister Vučić visit to Moscow in December 2016 he announced that Russia will support Serbia by giving it six MiG-29 warplanes free of charge, as well tanks and scout vehicles. After his meeting with Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, the Serbian prime minister said that all three phases of modernization of these planes - currently in service in the Russian Air Force - will cost Serbia between 180 and 230 million euros. The delivery is expected to take place in March or April 2017. “If we were buying such planes, that would cost us around 600 million euros. So you see how favorable the prices are, and how much we have been gifted,” the prime minister said. Vučić noted that these new additions would, “dramatically” improve the army’s operative capabilities, “to such an extent that it will no longer be the same army.”

The Russian branch of Sputnik in Serbia followed this news with title, “MiG-29 Fighter Jets from Russia to ‘Save’ Serbia’s Air Force.” The Russian journalist Evgeny Kru-
Serbia adopted 98 bilateral agreements with Russia in the period from 1994 to 2016.

**Joint Military Exercises between Serbia and Russia**

In 2016, the Serbian Armed Forces conducted and participated in 170 exercises from the battalion level with soldiers from more than 30 armies.

Two of the biggest exercises the Serbian army participated in were with the Russian and Belarusian armies. On November 3, at airports and training ranges belonging to the Serbian Armed Forces, the trilateral military exercise named Slavic Brotherhood 2016 began. This exercise included the Serbian Special Forces and the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and Belarus. The exercise involved more than 700 participants and 20 aircrafts. The final segment was attended by President of the Republic of Serbia Tomislav Nikolić, State Secretary at the Ministry of Defence Nenad Nerić, Serbian Armed Forces Chief of General Staff General Ljubiša Diković, the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces and First Deputy Defence Minister of the Republic of Belarus Major General Oleg Alekseevich Belokonev, representatives of the Ministry of Defence, Serbian Armed Forces, the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus, and diplomatic corps. During this exercise, members of Serbian Armed forces practiced
CEAS considers that the most dangerous thing that is neglected is the nature of these exercises. With Russia are usually conducted rather aggressive exercises (such as those belligerent with Russian special units who participated in the occupation of the Crimea), while exercises with NATO and EU member countries are in field of participation in peacekeeping missions, etc. Representation of this false symmetry is evident signal that Western International Community lacks of mechanism for reacting and addressing this issue.

In March 2017, Minister of Defence, Zoran Đorđević held a meeting with Russian Defence Attaché Colonel Andrei Kindyakov in which he stated that Serbia implements a balanced policy of military neutrality, and is dedicated to cooperation with all partners on the basis of mutual respect and appreciation. Đorđević expressed gratitude for Russian support for Serbian efforts to implement its foreign policy priorities. It was confirmed that the joint activities in the framework of bilateral military cooperation that had been implemented in the past period strengthened functional and operational capabilities of the Serbian Armed Forces, and that all mutually acceptable forms of cooperation would be developed and intensified in the future.

In August 2017, members of the 37th mechanized battalion of the Serbian Army took part in a tactical exercise with the firing of the Western Military District of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. Ministry of Defence stated that the goal of this exercise was to enhance the interoperability of two armies and improvement of the level of training for performing dedicated tasks. At the same time Serbian Army tanks won the third place in the first semifinal race of the “Tskin biathlon”, which was held at the military field “Alabin” near Moscow in which only few European countries has participated.

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Although Serbian officials as well as Western diplomats and analysts often insist and display false symmetry in number of military exercises in sense that Serbia mostly participate in those exercises with NATO and EU member countries than in the ones with Russia. There is a notion that some kind of a race exists between Russia and the political West. Apart from not being logical to compare all Member States of NATO and the EU on the one hand, and then Russia on the other, it may exist for a small Armed Force exercise sometimes in different interoperable systems. CEAS considers that the most dangerous thing that is neglected is the nature of these exercises. With Russia are usually conducted rather aggressive exercises (such as those belligerent with Russian special units who participated in the occupation of the Crimea), while exercises with NATO and EU member countries are in field of participation in peacekeeping missions, etc. Representation of this false symmetry is evident signal that Western International Community lacks of mechanism for reacting and addressing this issue.

RegEX1018 Controversy

Serbian Minister of Defense Aleksandar Vulin made inaccurate statements regarding the nature of planned command exercises with NATO and partners named RegEX1018. This incident must be seen from two perspectives. The first is in the context of the obligations undertaken by the Serbian government towards NATO through the Individual Partnership Action Plan in the field of public diplomacy. The second is in the context of EU Member States’ and NATO fears about the size, nature, and outcome of the announced Russian military exercise Zapad2017, which took place in September in Russia, Belarus, and Kaliningrad.

RegEX2018 is a small command-staff exercise within The Defence and Related Security Capacity Building Initiative for partner countries in various areas. The Initiative was formalized at the NATO summit in Wales within NATO’s policy of projection of stability beyond the borders of NATO. Minister Vulin’s statements did not contribute to

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57 President of the Republic of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaite announced that the oncoming exercise is an act of provocation and evidences the intention of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus to initiate a conflict with NATO. Express. February 2017. Available at: http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/766350/Russia-military-drills-Vladimir-Putin-planning-war-West-Lithuania-NATO.
the strengthening of public diplomacy regarding Serbia-NATO cooperation, which obligates that Serbian officials inform the public. It is important to note that while deceiving the public about RegEX2018, and Minister Vulin simultaneously departed for Moscow at the invitation of Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu to attend the closing of the tank biathlon, in which Serbian military units participated. The Russian media outlet Sputnik’s branch in Serbia was the only source to announce Serbia’s participation as the only foreign nation in this military exercise. These exercises were held almost simultaneously with Zapad2017, which provoked a great deal of controversy among NATO and EU Member States.

The Zapad exercise is a relic of the Cold War, which Russia has held every four years since 1999. After the last Zapad exercise, Crimea was illegally annexed in a large hybrid operation and the war in eastern Ukraine began. Russia also announced the reestablishment of the First Tank Guards Army, which had been disbanded since the end of the Cold War. Military experts and high-ranked officers in NATO countries caution that this army has a defensive character, opening questions regarding whether the units will return to Russia after its exercises in Belarus. In addition, the West fears that nearly 100,000 soldiers and other members of civilian services will participate in the military exercise, instead of the 13,000 figure provided by Russia officials. The military exercises have been preceded by numerous unannounced exercises that are thought to be a mask for the continued deployment of military troops to the border with Poland and Lithuania, as well as for a longer stay in Belarus, whose political leadership has recently shown a mild confrontation with the Putin’s regime. Western politicians are also concerned with the poor transparency of these military activities and the refusal of Russia to call observers. All this leads to the aforementioned manipulation with the actual number of participants in the exercises. The New York Times recently quoted NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg’s saying, “We have every reason to believe that it may be substantially more troops participating than the official reported numbers.” It is very indicative that almost any media in Serbia responded to this statement of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg.

In March 2015, the law on the reduction of risks in elementary and other disasters and management in emergency situations was drafted. This draft was well received by the expert community, despite the fact that it was not listed in the parliamentary procedure. This law would contribute to the resolution of the status of the Russian-Serbian Humanitarian Center in Niš. As CEAS has noticed, the process of adopting this law halted as soon as the Russian government began to pressure Serbia regarding the status of the Center. It is indicative that these pressures from Russian side came at the same time with the adaption of IPAP that in it’s chapter III contain provisions on crisis management system and emergency planning.
Bearing in mind all the above, including Vulin’s departure to Moscow, Serbian solo exercises with Russian troops, and the entire policy of quasi-military neutrality, the European path of Serbia is under question. In addition, the role of the EU Member States, which must decide to continue negotiations, is often overlooked. Currently Estonia chairs the EU. Although it has no diplomatic missions in Serbia, Baltic countries know very well the current trends of military convergence involving Russia, NATO, and the EU.

Short-term activities and small exercises do not yield sufficient results and it cannot form a trust for any eventual more serious joint operations. It is time for Serbia to open Chapter 31 with the EU on a common foreign and security policy.

**The So-Called Serbian-Russia Humanitarian Center in Niš**

An additional issue involving Serbian and Russian officials is so-called Humanitarian Center in the city of Niš, Serbia. The Humanitarian Center was established on the basis of the Cooperation Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Serbia on April 25, 2012 in Niš. The legal basis for the formation of the Center was the Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Serbia on cooperation in the field of emergency humanitarian response, the prevention of natural disasters and technological accidents and the elimination of its consequences from October 20, 2009.

The Center is an intergovernmental humanitarian non-profit organization, which has a status of legal entity. It is registered in the Republic of Serbia in accordance with its legislation. To contemporary observers, however, its true purpose remains obscure.

Serbian and Russian officials said that Russian-Serbian Humanitarian Center was founded in order to provide humanitarian emergency response in Serbia and other Balkan states, especially concerning natural disasters and some demining operations. At the Center’s opening ceremony in 2012, Sergei Shoigu, then Russia’s emergency minister, said the longstanding speculation that Russia wants to create a military installation in Serbia is, “a pure fabrication.”

Serbia joined the Mechanism of the EU Civil Protection in April 2015 during the visit of European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos Stylianides. During the devastating floods in May 2014, Serbia felt the benefit of European solidarity, through the EU Mechanism for Civil Protection. Most EU Member States offered assistance in the form of boats, helicopters, pumps, and aid packages. More than 800 humanitarian workers from EU Member States were deployed to Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The European Commission financing the transportation of such aid to the affected areas. This operation was the largest ever since the mechanism was established.

Considering Serbia’s path towards the EU and status as a member of the Mechanism, the existence and purpose of the Russian Humanitarian Center is in question. However,
some Russian officials, as well as some Serbian pro-Kremlin politicians, advocate for diplomatic status for the Center.

Controversy regarding the Center peaked around 2016, when frequent use of the Niš airport by the Russian cargo aircraft “Illusion” became evident. Requests from local journalists to access public information on the Flight Directorate prompted a statement explaining that there was an, “exception to the prohibition of transport of dangerous goods by air,” as well as “authorization to transport arms and military equipment.” According to the response, a permit was issued for a plane that took off from Niš for a “technical landing” in Jeddah and a final destination in Sarura, a city in Saudi Arabia, which is located on the border with Yemen.

Experts on human rights and weapons consider this a possible violation of international law. Since that time, no formal statements from Serbian officials have been issued. Russian officials insist on special diplomatic status for the Humanitarian Center in Niš as well as for the staff of the Center. The Kremlin justifies this request stating that it would confirm Serbia’s neutrality as well as reassure Moscow that Serbia is pursuing membership in NATO.

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Serbia’s Open Door Policy and the Growth of Chinese Authoritarian Internationalism

Serbia and China- 1 Among the 16

*Note: The following section was written by Dr. Martin Hala, a sinologist currently based in Prague. Educated in Prague, Shanghai, Berkley, and Harvard, he has taught at universities in Prague and Bratislava, and conducted research in China, Taiwan, and the United States. He has worked for several media-assistance organizations in Europe and Asia, and from 2014 to 2015 served as the Asia Pacific regional manager at the Open Society Foundations. Presently, he is director of the nonprofit organization AcaMedia.

A case in point illustrating the Russia-China partnership in Eastern Europe would be Serbia. Serbia is not (yet) bound by EU rules and regulations that to a certain degree limit Russia’s and China’s influence in the Central and Eastern European countries who are also EU members. In many respects, Serbia has gone further than others down the road of falling into the “Eurasian” orbit.

Russia’s influence in Serbia precedes that of China, yet today it is hard to see which of the two powers has a stronger standing in the country. Like elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe, the rise in China’s influence has not met any visible opposition from Russia. China has made significant advances in Serbia, even establishing visa-free regime for short-term visitors, a step no other European country would contemplate. Among other things, China provided the information systems at the Serbian Ministry of Defense, a potential security risk not even the Czech Republic, China’s self-proclaimed “unsinkable aircraft carrier in Europe,” would dare to take (last year, China’s Huawei was excluded from a tender for IT systems at the Czech Ministry of Interior, according to the Czech press reports). None of these breakthroughs has made Moscow nervous about her own position in the country.

In late May 2017, Serbian government established a “National Council for the Coordination of Cooperation with Russia and China” to be headed by former President Nikolić.

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when his term of office expires in June. The declared task of the Council is “to consider, direct and coordinate the implementation of the Agreement on Strategic Partnership between Serbia and Russia, and the Agreement on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between Serbia and China.” The Council will also “guide cooperation between Serbia and China in connection with the implementation of China’s Belt and Road strategy in Serbia.”

The Council is the first institutional expression of the looming Russia-China partnership in Central and Eastern Europe. Serbia is indeed far ahead of other Central and Eastern European states in this regard. An institutional arrangement for the government’s cooperation with both Russia and China would be hard to imagine elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe. In fact, such explicit arrangement including Russia would probably undermine China’s position in much of Eastern Europe. Therein lies the reason why Russia cannot be a member of 16+1 - that would still be too much to swallow for most East Europeans at this point.

For now, an office to coordinate the government’s work with both Russia and China (run by a former president, no less) can probably only exist in Serbia. Elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe, the emerging geopolitical cooperation between China and Russia has to take subtler forms - at least for the time being.

**Chronology of Bilateral Relations between Serbia and the People’s Republic of China from 2015 to 2017**

China’s intensification of cooperation with the countries of Southeastern Europe produces an uncomfortable impression that it could encourage the growth of authoritarian internationalism.

Several reports on such topics have been published, which CEAS recommends. One exemplary study is *A Road to Riches or a Road to Ruin? The Geo-economic Implications of China’s New Silk Road*, which highlights the following, “Chinese influence manifests itself primarily in the form of initiatives which aim to persuade and/or pressure CEE countries to adopt favorable policies vis-à-vis China. These concerns stem from two directions. First, there is a fear that some deals concluded with China may not comply with EU rules on public procurement, or other regulations and guidelines. Second, there is a fear of political influencing, which some see exhibited by the EU in avoiding direct references or statements towards

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In August 2016 Serbia and China gave its support to the Russia-Syrian initiative for delivering humanitarian aid to Aleppo, although almost none of the members of the United Nations have responded to Russian calls for participation in the Syrian humanitarian mission.
China’s legal defeat over the South China Sea after the objection by some Member States.\footnote{A Road to Riches or a Road to Ruin? The Geo-economic Implications of China’s New Silk Road. The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies. August 2017. Available at: http://hcss.nl/report/road-riches-or-road-ruin-geo-economic-implications-chinas-new-silk-road.}

The first international bilateral agreement recorded between the Republic of Serbia and the People’s Republic of China date back to 1957. From 1957 to 1989, the two counties adopted 11 agreements, while the number of agreements adopted between 1995 and 2016 amounts to 87.

In January 2015, the Chinese Ambassador to Serbia Li Manchang presented Foreign Minister Dačić with a grant of 10 million yuan in the form of technological equipment intended for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Office for European Integration.


A Chinese delegation visited Serbia in June 2016. During this visit the two countries signed 22 bilateral agreements including the Joint Statement of Serbia and China on the establishment of a comprehensive strategic partnership, which was signed by the Tomislav Nikolić and Xi Jinping. The agreements were signed in the field of construction, infrastructure, telecommunications, trade, defense, media, and the agreement on the design and execution of works on the construction of the motorway on the section Surčin-Obrenovac on Corridor 10. Vice President of the Government of Serbia Rasim Ljajić signed a Memorandum of Understanding and improving the development of the Information Silk Road for informational connectivity and a framework agreement on promoting cooperation in trade, tourism and telecommunications with the President of EXIM Bank.

China announced a multi-billion dollar fund to revive pancontinental land routes and develop maritime links, aiming to both expand commerce and perhaps give it more influence in a freight system dominated by European shippers. “One Belt, One Road (OBOR)”

In October 2016, Chinese Huawei and Telekom Serbia announced the start of the three-year ALL-IP transformation project worth 150 million euros. CEO of Telekom Serbia Predrag Ćulibrk stated that the company would purchase equipment, services, and infrastructure works from Huawei. Technological cooperation continued when Serbia’s government in May 2017 said that Huawei plans to begin offering its Smart City information and communications technology solution in Serbia. Huawei has also proposed to the Serbian government the possibility of delivering its eGovernment Cloud Solution, which would combine the data and telecommunication infrastructure of all governmental institutions.
In September 2017 official of Republic of China, Secretary of the Central Commission for Political and Legal Affairs Meng Jiendu visited Serbian officials. The main focus of the visit is the cooperation in the field of security. In Serbian media Mr. Meng Jiendu is presented as China’s first intelligence officer and one of the closest associates of Chinese President Xi Jinping. Beside Jiendu other members of Chinese delegation are also several senior security officials - deputy ministers of public and state security, as well as the Secretary General of the Security Council of China. Delegation met with Serbian Minister of Interior, Nebojša Stefanović. After the meeting, it was said that the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MUP) of Serbia started cooperation with Chinese company “Huawei” about the camera system, and that China offered its instructors to Serbia and the possibility for trainings in China.

In the One Belt One Road project, better known as the New Silk Road project, consists of a plan that includes the construction of high-speed rail, roads and highways, a network for transmission and distribution networks and fiber optic cables. Amid a slowing economy, the Chinese leaders are deeply worried about losing easy access to overseas consumer markets, which fueled the country’s turbo-charged industrialization in recent decades. Chinese state-owned banks as well as China-led international financial institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Development Bank are expected to shoulder much of the cost of this ambitious plan. China has already set up an initial 40 billion dollars Silk Road Fund, while the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank is allocating an additional 50 billion dollars. More than 60 countries have expressed interest in joining along and Serbia is one of them. Funding big-ticket infrastructure projects overseas allows China to prevent massive layoffs in and aids the survival of major state-owned enterprises and affiliated companies, which are running out of lucrative projects at home. Improving the infrastructure of trading partners also facilitates Chinese exports owing to reduced transaction costs. Above all, however, it allows China to lock in precious mineral resources and transform nations across the Eurasian land mass and Indian Ocean into long-term debtors. The One Belt One Road project may appear a good opportunity for countries, especially those with low GDPs and weak economy, such as Serbia. However, there is still an open question if this project is simply a tool for China to expand its global influence.

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The trend of frequent bilateral meetings continued through 2017 with a meeting in February between Minister of Defence Zoran Đorđević and the Chinese Ambassador to Serbia, during which Đorđević stated that the cooperation between Serbia and China has never been stronger and thanked the Ambassador for strategic cooperation in security sector reform, as well as for donation in information technology equipment for the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Also in January, the agreement between Serbia and China on the liberation of the visa regime entered into effect. In March, President Nikolić made an official visit to China, where he was recognized as an honorary citizen of Beijing for his personal contribution to improving relations between the two countries.

In May 2017 Prime Minister and President-elect Vučić visited China, during which Serbia concluded its loan agreement with China Exim Bank for financing the reconstruction and modernization of the first section of a high-speed railway between Belgrade and Budapest. The preferential loan is worth 297.6 million dollars. As Brahma Chellaney, Professor of Strategic Studies at the New Delhi-based Center for Policy Research described in his article for Project Syndicate, China is running debt-trap diplomacy, as some small developing nations pile up unsustainable debts to China.

In May 2017, outgoing President Nikolić, in the latest reshuffle of the government, became head of a dubious structure called National Council for Coordination of Cooperation with Russia and China, which is more heavily staffed with 30 permanent staff members, than several other government agencies with clear mandates.

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Basic Facts About Serbia and NATO

Relations between Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and then Serbia, with NATO over the past twenty years have been crucially defined by the role of NATO in stopping the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, bombing the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999, and in supporting the new status of Kosovo since 2007, which will be elaborated with more details in following paragraphs.

Nevertheless, democratic opposition in Serbia made an historic step forward in January 2001 by adopting a program for resolving the armed rebellion of a segment of the Albanian population that had been simmering in the south of Serbia since 2000 through peaceful means and by taking measures against terrorism in cooperation the Kosovo Force, for which a legal framework was already in place: United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and the Military-Technical Agreement. This cooperation was expanded to include the EU and the United States, with an active role given to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations.

Upon successful resolution of the crisis in southern Serbia and until the assassination of Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić in 2003, the Serbian authorities worked intensely on the restoration of broken relations with politically Western countries, NATO Member States, and NATO itself. The State Union of Serbia and Montenegro submitted an official request in June 2003 to the Alliance for accession to the Partnership for Peace program. In order to prepare the State Union for engagement in the Partnership for Peace, in June 2003 NATO started a special program for Serbia and Montenegro: the Tailored Cooperation Program, which included participation in courses at the NATO College in Oberammergau, attendance at seminars and conferences, and the highest form of cooperation available to a non-NATO member, that being observer status to members of the armed forces at a number of Partnership for Peace military exercises.

The period of initial negotiations on the new status of Kosovo from late 2005 until the end of 2007 was marked by an intensive anti-NATO campaign by the contemporary Serbian government, during which time fabrications and misinformation were spread. The Serbia-NATO Defense Reform Group was formed in 2005 as a joint body of the Ministry of Defense of Serbia and Montenegro and NATO as a result of an initiative of the Kingdom of Norway as the NATO Contact-Point Embassy at the time. Its primary goal was to increase the support of the Alliance in the process of security sector reform in Serbia and Montenegro, in the context of intensive work on the first Strategic Defense Review. In December 2006, following months of consultations, NATO approved the formation of
the Group through the Political Committee and the Political-Military Committee of the Partnership for Peace program. The Group, which began operations in February 2006, represented a unique mechanism of cooperation between Serbia and NATO, one which the Alliance had never developed with any other country.

The work of the Group during the period from 2005 to 2008 was assessed as very successful, and experience has shown that it greatly facilitated the inter-ministerial approach to the processes important for defense reform and involvement in the Partnership for Peace program.

The Agreement on Transit Arrangements concluded between Serbia and Montenegro and NATO, as well as the start of operations of the Serbia-NATO Defense Reform Group, imposed the need to strengthen direct institutional relations between Serbia and the Alliance. On the basis of an agreement between the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Serbia and NATO, starting from December 2006, a NATO Military Liaison Office was opened in Belgrade in the building of the Ministry of Defense.

On December 26, 2007, Serbia declared military neutrality. Prior to that, in December 2006, Serbia had become a member of the Partnership for Peace program and began the process of institutional cooperation with NATO. The manner in which Serbia unilaterally declared its neutrality is quite controversial; it did so in one sentence in the Resolution of the National Parliament of the Republic of Serbia on the protection of sovereignty, territorial integrity and constitutional order. The passage containing the relevant sentence reads: “Due to the overall role of the NATO Pact, from the illegal bombing of Serbia in 1999, without a Security Council resolution, to Annex 11 of the Ahtisaari Plan rejected by Serbia, which determines that NATO is the ultimate authority in an independent Kosovo, the National Parliament of the Republic of Serbia brings a decision on declaring military neutrality of the Republic of Serbia in relation to existing military alliances, until a referendum which would be a final decision on the matter.”

Serbia’s unilaterally-declared military neutrality has not been recognized by any country within the international community, which by some definitions is necessary for legitimacy. Serbia has also not requested such recognition.

Given that much of the abovementioned is not included in the resolution proclaiming military neutrality, and that Serbia conducts its internal and foreign policies in the manner of a country that has not declared neutrality in accordance with most accepted definitions of the term, but rather exhibits its neutrality only in relation to NATO, Serbia as a country can be understood to be strategically disoriented and not militarily neutral.

Despite that, in October 2008, the Republic of Serbia and NATO concluded a very important Security Agreement, although the National Parliament of the Republic of Serbia ratified it only in July 2011. This Agreement guarantees the minimum necessary standards of protection of data that are mutually exchanged. In this way, exchange of information of
confidential content with NATO is enabled, creating the conditions for a more active role of the Republic of Serbia in the Partnership for Peace program.

In late October 2008, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Decision on establishing a Mission of the Republic of Serbia to NATO, which represented an important step in strengthening Serbia’s diplomatic and defense-military presence at the Alliance headquarters for the promotion of dialogue and cooperation. The Military Representative Office at the Mission of the Republic of Serbia to NATO was established in September 2010 with the primary task of representing the Ministry of Defense and the Serbian Armed Forces at NATO and EU headquarters in Brussels.

Partnership for Peace programme is the most important NATO initiative, formally initiated in 1994, designed to reinforce trust and cooperation among members of the Alliance and other Euro-Atlantic States with a view to developing and strengthening stability and security in Europe and beyond. The protection and promotion of fundamental freedoms and basic human rights, as well as preservation of freedom, justice and peace through democracy, represent the common values on which the Partnership is built and they are compatible with the values of other international and regional organizations - United Nations, OSCE, Council of Europe, European Union and others.65

Through an active participation in this programme, the Republic of Serbia is in a position to cooperate with NATO, its members and other PfP participants in all areas of interest and to reaffirm its commitment to strengthen regional and broader international stability and, at the same time, to contribute to sustainable and long-term development of the Region. Serbia’s participation in the programme bears witness to its commitment to common values on which, not only the Partnership for Peace rests upon, but all European and Euro-Atlantic structures and also has a positive effect on the process of the reform of the security sector and the defence system, especially in the context of assistance to a more effective adjustment to the generally accepted principles of democratic oversight of the armed forces and strengthening of the country’s readiness to respond to modern security threats and challenges..

The Declarations adopted at the Bucharest NATO Summit in 2008, and Strasbourg/Kehl in 2009 expressed NATO’s readiness to further develop relations with the Republic of Serbia by taking full advantage of Serbia’s PfP membership, as well as to deepen cooperation, primarily through the development of the Individual Partnership Action Plan.

An important aspect of practical cooperation between the Republic of Serbia and NATO is the destruction of surpluses of outdated ammunition and ordnance posing a threat to the security of the people and environment of Serbia. To that end, NATO and the Republic of Serbia launched a project, on 12 October 2016, aimed at destruction of ammunition and ordinance surpluses, and technical /technological modernization of “Technical Over-

haul Works Kragujevac”. The project, whose total value is 3.7 million dollars, is financed by the NATO Trust Fund. Assets of this Fund, headed by Great Britain, were donated by several NATO member and partner countries. This is the fourth trust fund whereby NATO has financially supported the implementation of projects in the Republic of Serbia.

Additionally, there are many projects under the NATO Science for Peace and Security programme in which young Serbian scientists are engaged. These NATO funded and supported scientific projects have a specific practical value and importance for people, local communities and public institutions financed by the NATO Trust Fund.

Furthermore an important area of Serbia’s relations with NATO is cooperation in the field of civil protection and emergency situations, enabling Serbia to acquire best experience and improve its structures and capacity for responding to natural disasters and other emergencies. Faced with the migration flow, the Republic of Serbia submitted, for the first time on 17 December 2015, a formal request to NATO Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC), asking for assistance. Responding to Serbia’s request, assistance in tents, blankets, mattresses, hygiene products, medicines and other essential supplies for refugee needs was provided by several NATO member and partner countries.

The most important step towards strengthening cooperation with NATO since Serbia declared its military neutrality in July 2011 was the adoption of the Presentation Document, which represents the first step towards the realization of an Individual Partnership Action Plan. The Individual Partnership Action Plan was established at the NATO Summit in Prague in 2002 and represents an intensive form of institutional cooperation with NATO to assist partner countries in reforms and modernization of its defense system, and which adjusts entirely to the partner’s needs through the drafting of the Presentation Document for participation in the Individual Partnership Action Plan. It also represents the closest form of cooperation with NATO and country where they have no pretension to become members. The Document is drafted every two years and can be updated on an annual basis, after the submission of information by the partner country. Cooperation between the partner country and NATO through the Individual Partnership Action Plan commonly takes place in the areas of the political framework, security policy, defense, security and military issues, public information, science, environment and emergency planning, as well as administrative matters and issues of security and resource protection.
The Individual Partnership Action Plan Presentation Document was presented in November 2011 at NATO Headquarters in Brussels. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia stated on that occasion that the “undertaken activities related to the Individual Partnership Action Plan are in accordance with the commitment of the Republic of Serbia to actively participate in the Partnership for Peace, but not contrary to the policy of military neutrality of the Republic of Serbia.”

The Presentation Document then changed hands between the Serbian government and NATO for the next two and a half years, to some extent because during this period Serbia changed Ministers of Defense three times and also in part due to objections Albania had regarding the Document. As a result, Serbia submitted its agreed proposal to NATO for consideration only in 2014, although the Serbian government had initiated drafting the Individual Partnership Action Plan back in 2011.

In December 2014 the Individual Partnership Action Plan was approved by the government of Serbia and on January 15 by the North Atlantic Council, and therefore the document formally came into force. Adoption of the Individual Partnership Action Plan was a significant step forward in the relations between Serbia and NATO. The Individual Partnership Action Plan reflects the policy and reform of the Republic of Serbia combined with NATO collective recommendations and it also facilitates focusing the cooperation on the fulfillment of needs of the Republic of Serbia and common interests of NATO.

The Individual Partnership Action Plan consists of four chapters which are Political and Security Framework; Defense and military issues; Public diplomacy, scientific cooperation, crisis management and emergency planning system; and Protection of classified information. Implementation of IPAP was challenging due to overlap with migrant crisis and snap election which might cause difficulties and stagnation in the implementation process.

The abovementioned chapters are implemented through 215 actions, of which the first chapter has 110 actions, the second has 62, the third has 36, and the final has 7.

The evaluation process of the implementation of the Individual Partnership Action Plan ended in 2016 and there is still no thorough public record of the implemented activities. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs published brief summary of the evaluation process stating that, “the results of the Individual Partnership Action Plan implementation analysis for the first year are more than encouraging, considering that it is the first biennial cycle between the Republic of Serbia and NATO. Out of a total of 215 activities planned for 2015 and 2016, only 6 were not implemented within the set period of time. It is important that 62% of activities were carried out within the planned period, 35% were partly implemented, while only 3% were not implemented at all. The significant results achieved in the In-
dividual Partnership Action Plan implementation were recognized also by NATO in the regular performance review cycle. 

Beside the fact that the evaluation record is still kept in secrecy, even after the CEAS team submitted several official requests for meetings, there is still no indications that Serbia is preparing for a new two-year Individual Partnership Action Plan.

**Contradictory Perceptions of NATO**

Since the political changes in 2000, relations between Serbia and NATO have been continuously improving. This does not, however, correspond to the public perception of NATO, which remains almost the same as it was immediately after the bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. NATO’s intervention in 1999, which ended with the Kumanovo Military-technical Agreement by which the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia’s Armed Forces withdrew from Kosovo and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244, which stripped Serbia of its authority in Kosovo, has not been presented to the Serbian public as consequences of the atrocities perpetrated in Kosovo by Yugoslav Armed Forces, but rather as a Western scheme for the secession of Kosovo from Serbia at any cost.

Both Serbia and NATO are responsible for this state of affairs by tacitly agreeing to conduct joint activities away from view of the Serbian public. In this way, the public has been denied the opportunity to form a different opinion of NATO in the light of new circumstances, above all, with respect to the significant contribution in security sector reform activities made possible through Trust Funds. CEAS research conducted in 2012 shows that among those from the expert public and employees of the state administration who oppose Serbia’s membership in NATO, there is no objection to a greater role of NATO in security sector reform. One gets the impression that such a rational stance has not been adequately exploited to improve the perception of NATO among the Serbian public. Unfortunately, even the Democratic Party Government, which successfully implemented the professionalization of the armed forces and during whose time in office many of the mentioned activities with NATO were developed and implemented, did not have the political courage to explain the importance of cooperation with NATO to the public. NATO rhetoric was mainly focused on the side benefits of cooperation such as, “messages to foreign investors” or “stability of the environment.” The media and civil society must also share some level of responsibility for the fact that Serbian citizens, who demonstrated their political maturity by not opposing the First Agreement on normalization of relations with Kosovo by a majority, still lack reliable information upon which to adopt

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a more rational attitude towards NATO. Only a few civil society organizations publicly advocate Serbia’s membership in NATO. Representatives of parliamentary parties, such as the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians, occasionally mention that Serbia could at some point in time become a NATO member. However, like the few minor opposition parties that sometime mention NATO, they see the benefits of the membership only as a financial investment, or as a necessity on the path to integration in the EU. This period presents the last period of positive climate for more action and better informing of public about Serbia-NATO present and past history. Russian soft power mechanisms and in particular media and propaganda through Sputnik, rolled in only few years after.

These contradictory perceptions stand in contrast to the scope of NATO contributions to security sector reforms, including the sub-section of defense, which, because of the political-ideological orientation of Serbia, excludes the highest level of cooperation attainable: membership. Hence, the process of modernization of army units to NATO standards, i.e., interoperability, which under the current framework is limited to one squad, is envisaged to expand to include one battalion within the Individual Partnership Action Plan, in addition to some units from other parts of the armed forces. NATO officials, however, have doubts that Serbia, because of its currently scarce financial and other resources, will actually manage to reach this level. Only through the Individual Partnership Action Plan can sensitive political topics, such as mechanisms and institutions of civil and democratic control of the armed forces, become part of the cooperation equation with NATO. Evidently, the ability of NATO to influence reforms in Serbia is significantly less than in those cases of NATO candidate countries. For these countries, reforms become part of NATO’s policy of conditionality for membership. Through its current voluntary cooperation with Serbia, NATO will not be able to influence the “purging” of the top of the hierarchy of the military that was discredited in the wars of the 1990s. Precisely because of the limited contribution NATO can make to security sector reform in Serbia, the role of other international actors, above all the EU, is all the more crucial.

**Human Casualties during the NATO Air Campaign**

The trend of Russian politicians portraying NATO as a villain continues in Serbia. In October 2013, Russian Ambassador to Serbia Aleksandar Chepurin, in an interview with the pro-government newspaper Večernje Novosti, repeatedly emphasized the importance of Slavic identity and identity politics. He stated, “we do not want to be greater Serbs than you...NATO is a throwback to the last century. Wounds of the NATO bombing and deaths are still fresh – and not only in Serbia. I will never understand or accept those who, for 30 pieces of silver, are pushing the country into this military alliance, betraying the basic human values, and undermining the memory of the victims. Serbia has a long tradition as a nonaligned country.”

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The Serbian government has never conducted an official investigation into the exact number of persons (primarily, civilians) that lost their lives as the result of NATO attacks during bombing 1999. At the same time, the official data on the number of schools, kindergartens, hospitals, health centers, bridges, etc. is well known and already part of history textbooks in Serbia. Previous and current governments made public estimations about the numbers of lost lives, stating that between 1,500 and 4,000 civilians were killed. Additionally, Russian officials joined Serbian in claiming these estimations about the number of victims. In March 2017, Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov claimed that, “thousands of victims including several hundred killed children” lost their lives in the NATO bombing of Serbia.

On the other hand, nongovernmental organizations in Serbia have worked on researching and documenting human losses with regards to NATO. In their research, the Humanitarian Law Center and Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo have documented human losses in relation to Kosovo conflict. According to their data, during the war in Kosovo, 13,535 persons were killed or disappeared. This number includes 10,812 Albanians, 2,197 Serbs and 526 members of other ethnic communities, including Roma, Ashkali, Egyptians, Bosniaks, etc.. Most of these victims were killed and/or disappeared on the territory of Kosovo (13,173), and most of them were civilians (10,111). The Humanitarian Law Center and its Kosovo branch have documented that NATO attacks killed a total of 758 people: 205 Serbian civilians, 220 Albanian civilians, 28 civilians of Roma and other nationalities, 30 members of the Kosovo Liberation Army, and 275 members of the Yugoslav Army/Ministry of Interior of Serbia. On the territory of Serbia, 260 people were killed; in Montenegro, 10; and in Kosovo, 488. In the period from March 20 to June 14, 1999, Serbian forces, under the pretext of, “defending Serbian territory from NATO aggression and Shiptar terrorists,” killed 6,901 Albanians who were not participating in hostilities. During the same period, the Kosovo Liberation Army had killed 328 civilians and 136 Serbian Roma and other non-Albanians who were not involved in the armed conflict. In the clashes between the Yugoslav Army/Ministry of Interior and the Kosovo Liberation Army, 1,204 members of the Kosovo Liberation Army were killed and 559 members of the Yugoslav Army and the Ministry of Interior of Serbia. The total number of victims of the war in Kosovo also includes 1,306 persons who were killed in the period June 10th, 1999 – December 31st, 1999. This number includes 715 Serbs, 318 Albanians, and 273 members of other ethnic communities. The number of victims of the war in Kosovo also includes 213 children under the age of 7 and 1,275 persons over the age of 60.

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Despite the published data, both Serbian and Russian officials continue to make public statements about thousands of civilian casualties.

This context is much less of a topic of discussion in Serbia, despite that several mass graves of containing bodies of more than 800 Kosovo Albanians were discovered in the territory of Serbia, first in 2001, and the most recent one in 2014. Three out of four mass graves were discovered on the grounds that still are or were at the time of conflict police or army compounds (Batajnica – Special Anti-Terrorist Unit Training center – 744 bodies, Petrovo selo – Special Police Units Teaching center - at least 61 bodies, Rudnica – placed next to the area that belonged to the Army of Yugoslavia before and during the conflict 1999 - 54 bodies. Even though first mass graves in Batajnica were discovered

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in spring 2001, and International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia prosecuted and sentenced Vlastimir Đorđević, former Assistant Minister of the Serbian Ministry of Interior and Chief of the Public Security Department of the Ministry of Interior, until now no one has been indicted or prosecuted before the local courts in Serbia for concealment of bodies operation.

**Depleted Uranium, Enriched Imagination**

Another area which is used to perpetuate the denial of facts about atrocities and victims during the armed conflict in Kosovo, thus successfully preventing any discussion on NATO integration of Serbia has recently became the debate on the impact of usage of depleted uranium ammunition during NATO intervention. Since 2012 when the book, *Crime in War, Genocide in Peace*, edited by Slobodan Čikarić, a retired professor of University of Belgrade and current president of Serbian Association Against Cancer, Slobodan Petrović, retired lieutenant-general, and Vladislav Jovanović, one of the closest associates of Slobodan Milošević and former Minister of Foreign Affairs, was published, a debate on impact of depleted uranium has been ongoing and progressing towards creation of a completely false narrative about 1999 and the consequences in Serbian public. One of the features of the debate is the claim that there is an epidemic cancer problem in Serbia, which is supposedly the result of NATO bombing, and claims that Serbia is on top of the list of countries with its cancer mortality rate. In February 2017, a conference was organized by the Association of Physics and Chemists of Serbia and the Serbian Academy of Arts and Science at the Faculty for Chemistry, where the main advocates that Serbia is suffering from ‘epidemic cancer problem’ were invited to speak, among them Dr. Čikarić and Dr. Danica Grujičić, a neurosurgeon and professor at the University of Belgrade. Their claims were contested with data presented by the Agency for ionizing radiation that there is no elevated radiation in areas which were hit with depleted uranium ammunition, however, these did not receive the same amount of attention in media and public. Since then, the media and different physicians, above all, Grujičić have continued to publicize these claims, regardless of scientific research and arguments coming from relevant experts that the high number of deaths due to cancer

The most recent claims also introduced several new characteristics, including those that NATO committed, “an ecological genocide,” despite the lack of such legal qualification in international law and the claim that NATO led a, “nuclear war” against Serbia, equalizing the consequences of NATO intervention with those of usage of atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan in 1945. Dr. Grujičić and her colleagues gathered around an initiative to request the state-sponsored coordination council with the purpose to document the consequences of NATO bombing to, “prove that NATO committed ecocide: ecological genocide” in Serbia.

One of the features of the debate is the claim that there is an epidemic cancer problem in Serbia, which is supposedly the result of NATO bombing, and claims that Serbia is on top of the list of countries with its cancer mortality rate.

in Serbia is due to poor conditions in the health system, and not NATO bombing.\(^{73}\) The most recent claims also introduced several new characteristics, including those that NATO committed, “an ecological genocide,” despite the lack of such legal qualification in international law and the claim that NATO led a, “nuclear war” against Serbia, equalizing the consequences of NATO intervention with those of usage of atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan in 1945.\(^{74}\) Dr. Grujičić and her colleagues gathered around an initiative to request the state-sponsored coordination council with the purpose to document the consequences of NATO bombing to, “prove that NATO committed ecocide: ecological genocide” in Serbia. They misrepresent available data, claiming, for example, that the United Nations commission led by Senegalese expert “Makaru Kante” (as used by Dr. Grujičić) claimed that due to NATO, Bor, Pančevo, Kragujevac, and Novi Sad were declared unsafe for human life, and that this report was ‘hidden’ within the United Nations and it was discovered by accident.\(^{75}\) The report which they compiled is actually the report prepared by the Inter-Agency Needs Assessment Mission dispatched by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999, (of which Senegalese expert Bakary Cante from United Nations Environmental Programmed was part of) in order to collect data on damaged and destroyed hazardous installations such as chemical plants and refineries, and also on homes and infrastructure, to research both actual and potential environmental impacts: soil and water pollution, acute air pollution, and damage to ecosystems, and to collect information on the state of the environment in Yugoslavia before the war began. The report was published in 1999 and is available online, where such claims are non-existent. When referring to these cities and environmental damage, the report says, “the Mission visited Pančevo, 15 kilometers northeast of Belgrade, where the destruction of a petrochemical plant has resulted in the release of various chemical fluids (such as vinyl-chloride, chlorine, ethylene-dichloride, propylene) into the atmosphere, water and soil. This may pose a serious threat to health in the Region, as well as to ecological systems in the broader Balkans and European Region. Many of the compounds released in these chemical accidents can cause cancer, miscarriages and birth defects. Others are associated with fatal nerve and liver diseases. A proper scientific and technical fact-finding mission under the United

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\(^{75}\) Ibid.
Nations Environment Programme’s lead is urgently called for.”

The report does not mention Novi Sad, Bor, or Kragujevac within the context of the ecological disaster Grujičić mentions. Grujičić and her group go so far as to claim that NATO, “spent all the oxygen in the next 50 years,” and that, “all the soldiers that participated in cleaning the areas NATO hit were recorded by the Military-Medical Academy in Belgrade as having chromosome aberrations,” and that, “World Health Organizations participated in concealment of these proves,” and that NATO conducted a, “nuclear war” against Serbia in its southern parts. All of these claims are offered without any data or official report from any of the mentioned institution.

As a consequence of these irresponsible claims, another initiative was recently announced by a Serbian Royal Academy of Scientists and Artists with the blessing of Patriarch Irinej of the Serbian Orthodox Church, on the lawsuit planned against NATO Member States for material and non-material damage inflicted upon the citizens of Serbia during the, “illegal aggression.” It remains unclear to which court this lawsuit will be submitted, however, the lawyers claim that NATO Member States will be held responsible for violation of article 7 of the Charter of the United Nations and articles 5 and 6 of the NATO Statute. The legal team is also planning to include the usage of cluster ammunition, despite the fact Serbia has not yet acceded to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, even though it played an important role in the Oslo Process that produced the convention.

It is therefore of great importance for future cooperation between Serbia and NATO to open the debate on causes, context, and consequences of the NATO bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999, with participation of relevant yet credible experts from both NATO countries and Serbia in order to counter false narratives before more damage is inflicted on NATO-Serbia relations.

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78 Serbian Royal Academy of Scientists and Artists is the non-governmental organization that claim to continue the work of the Royal Academy which stopped with its work with destruction of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1941. Available at: http://kraljevska-akademija.edu.rs/?page_id=11.


80 Serbia played a leadership role throughout the Oslo Process that created the Convention on Cluster Munitions, most notably by hosting a conference for states affected by cluster munitions in Belgrade in October 2007. It actively participated in the formal negotiations in Dublin in May 2008 and joined in the consensus adoption of the convention text at the conclusion. However, Serbia attended the convention’s Oslo Signing Conference in December 2008 as an observer. At the time, it did not provide an explanation for the lack of signature, but in 2009, local media reported that the General Staff of the Serbian Army had recommended to the National Security Council that Serbia not sign the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which effectively stopped actions directed toward achieving that objective. Available at: http://the-monitor.org/en-GB/reports/2015/serbia/cluster-munition-ban-policy.aspx.
one of the organizations that monitors the usage of cluster munitions recorded, “non-signatory Serbia has expressed interest in the convention and support for its humanitarian objectives, but the Ministry of Defense has expressed several concerns relating to accession. In April 2015, Serbia’s Minister of Defense said the government would consider accession to the convention after it has acquired new weapons to replace Serbia’s stocks of cluster munitions.”

Serbia inherited a stockpile of cluster munitions after the break-up of the Yugoslavia, but has not disclosed information on the numbers or types stockpiled. Cluster munitions were used by Yugoslav People’s Army and forces under its control in the armed conflicts from 1991 to 2001, as well as by Croatian, Bosnian, and Albanian forces.

The claims of nuclear war against Serbia are also supported by statements of several retired NATO generals, Italian Biagio di Grazia being the last of them. Di Grazia, a former military attaché in the Embassy of Italy from 1997 to 2001 recently presented his book, Why NATO bombed Yugoslavia, in Belgrade. He states that the NATO intervention was actually a war that served as, “a message to Russia and China.”

It is therefore of great importance for future cooperation between Serbia and NATO to open the debate on causes, context, and consequences of the NATO bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999, with participation of relevant yet credible experts from both NATO countries and Serbia in order to counter false narratives before more damage is inflicted on NATO-Serbia relations.

Assessment of Serbia-NATO Relations and Serbia's IPAP Implementation by Serbian and NATO Officials

*Note: This chapter contains statements presented by Mr. Branislav Pekić, Minister Counselor at Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Dr. Knut Kirste, Political Advisor for Serbia from Political Affairs and Security Policy Division, NATO Headquarters, at a CEAS roundtable held on June 15, 2017 in Belgrade.

On the occasion of first visit to Serbia of the newly appointed Dr. Knut Kirste, Political Advisor for Serbia from Political Affairs and Security Policy Division, NATO Headquarters, CEAS organized rear, if not only public debate on contemporary Serbia NATO relationship and implementation of IPAP between Serbia and NATO.

Key speakers were Dr. Knut Kirste, Political Advisor for Serbia from Political Affairs and Security Policy Division, NATO Headquarters, and Mr. Branislav Pekić, Minister Counselor at Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Both speakers presented their attitudes on current NATO relations with Serbia.

Minister Counselor Pekić said that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defense are doing all in their power to publicize their work and make cooperation with NATO transparent and open to the general public. He also pointed that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs cooperates with CEAS and with other nongovernmental organizations.
“By the same token, everybody visiting the website of the Foreign Ministry knows that every meeting with NATO representatives is kept records of, we publish brief communications, and the Individual Partnership Action Plan is on our website. Whoever should wish to read it can get acquainted with the state of play, so we are trying to be as transparent as possible,” said Pekić.

Pekić then reflect on Serbian military neutrality, which is not perceived as an obstacle to Serbia or to NATO with regards to continued cooperation. “We have reached a fairly good level of cooperation,” he concluded. Pekić said that Serbia and NATO have touched upon certain issues, and they are yet to consider all modes of cooperation, although military neutrality is certainly not a hinderance.

Pekić also pointed out the importance of political dialogue, which has significantly improved. “For example, last year we had five high-level meetings between NATO and Serbian officials. This year there have been fewer, because of the recent elections, but in the coming months we expect a few very important NATO officials to visit Serbia. All this indicates, at least at the level of political dialogue, that all works well. Last year, in November, we had a very successful visit of our then Prime Minister Vučić to NATO and his meeting with Mr. Stoltenberg, in addition to encounters in New York and Davos. There is a very good feeling, between Vučić and Stoltenberg, which is very important, and a good prerequisite for further development of our good relations. Of course, on the side of the Secretary General, Mr. Stoltenberg, there is good will, an interest to develop these relations,” he said.

Regarding the implementation of the Individual Partnership Action Plan, Pekić said, “various ministries in Serbia, NATO, and the military liaison office – we are all cooperating very well on this project. Last year a report was developed on the implementation and it was sent to NATO. The predecessor of our guest, Mr. Walker, visited Serbia last year and had talks with various line ministries, followed by NATO’s preparation of this report’s assessment. Unfortunately, we cannot go into the details of the report because it is confidential, but in general we can say that the results are very positive, this being the first Individual Partnership Action Plan for Serbia. More than 60% of set objectives have been reached, only 3% have not been, so around 30% are in the pipeline. This is why we esteemed that instead of a new Individual Partnership Action Plan we should carry on implementing the existing one this year. So, this year we are going to complete the implementation work on the existing one. This year is the final year for implementation of that Individual Partnership Action Plan, by the end of the year we will have drafted a mini report, but we agreed with Mr. Kirste and we have already discussed this with NATO representatives to prepare a new Individual Partnership Action Plan for next year. So, this new process is not going to be a brand new document, but an update on the existing one, because some things are obsolete, so I expect us to have an inter-ministerial working meeting in a few upcoming weeks, we shall invite the members of our working group, but also, I think, more stakeholders.”
Dr. Knut Kirste, Advisor for Serbia from Political Affairs and Security Policy Division, NATO Headquarters

Pekić continued stating, “we are probably going to invite the Serbian European Integration Office and some other institutions originally involved with the Individual Partnership Action Plan, to consider options for future steps on a broad basis. Particularly given that some of those things are part of our obligations to comply with on our way to the EU membership. So, what can we say about the Individual Partnership Action Plan, most objectives have been reached by the Ministry of Defence, let me commend them a little for this, their representative is here with us, because there are reasons for that. Because they launched their cooperation with NATO earlier, I mean that first cooperation with NATO after joining Partnership for Peace had a military character, it was only later that the political dialogue advanced. So, they have achieved quite a lot and I believe their job will now be easier than ours, or that of other ministries. We have mentioned here public diplomacy.”

Considering the difficulties in implementing the Individual Partnership Action Plan, Pekić identified public diplomacy as the weakest link. “It has lowest mark in the Individual Partnership Action Plan,” he said. The main reason is the legacy of the 1999 bombing. According to Pekić, that is always an impediment in developing the relations between Serbia and NATO.

Likewise, he addressed the importance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defense in promoting Serbia-NATO cooperation, but not promotion of Serbia’s membership in NATO. Pekić said, “it is not just about military cooperation. It is also about
scientific projects and civil protection in emergency situations, etc. That is precisely why we have formulated strategic guidelines that should be approved by the Government of the Republic of Serbia, stipulating the obligation of the line ministries to inform the public of their respective activities. So, it is not just the Foreign and Defence Ministries, it will also be the Ministry of the Interior, for the part of emergency management, and the Ministry of Education and Science for the cooperation on the project of Science for Peace and Security, and some other stakeholders.”

In the end Pekić stressed the necessity of the Kosovo Force presence in Kosovo and Metohija especially related to threat of Kosovo Security Force transformations and even through small projects. “For example, NATO has reconstructed a bridge in Kosovo last year and that was a positive contribution to this,” he said. “It is our task to be as clear and transparent as possible in our public appearances, to take all your questions and I believe that will be helpful in better understanding of relations between Serbia and NATO,” he concluded.

Political Advisor Dr. Knut Kirste also addressed Serbia-NATO relations as well as NATO perspectives toward the Western Balkans.

Kirste noted that NATO remains committed to the Western Balkans, adding that NATO is primarily interested in a stable, prosperous, and democratic Region, as it is a strategic interest of the Alliance due to its geographical proximity. He continued by stating that NATO Member States are more stable, safe, and secure when the Western Balkans are also stable, democratic, and prosperous. Therefore, the Alliance has an interest in positive engagement in the Region. NATO is encouraged by countries in the Region that have joined the growing transatlantic community. Kirste noticed that countries of the Region need more public diplomacy to explain NATO’s purpose and role, and combat misperceptions. Citizens in the Western Balkans should be provided with information to make their own judgments about the Alliance and what a transatlantic perspective could mean for them. He also stressed the importance of NATO’s reengagement in the Western Balkans and close coordination and cooperation with the EU, with a particular role for international community in strengthening stability and security.

During his visit to Belgrade, Mr. Kirste met with Serbian officials and noted that they discussed issues of mutual concern and join security issues, as well as political developments in the Region. He continued to emphasize how much Serbia-NATO relations have progressed in recent years, stressing that the relationship had many obstacles to overcome. This started with a very low baseline and historic baggage, however Serbia join the Partnership for Peace in 2006 with developed individual partnership cooperation program. There is whole host of activities that are very practical and beneficial for Serbia. Kirste continued, “we understand that the NATO-Serbia partnership operates in a certain context. We understand that you are neutral and want to be military neutral anyway, and that you have very good relations to Russia and to other countries. You have no immediate membership perspective in the Alliance so that is that is sort of the framework in
Serbia: Key Obstacles to Stabilization and Democratization

which we operate and which we take as sort of the basis for developing the Serbia NATO partnership. So in a way it is this partnership that is demand-driven where Serbia determines how far want to go, but it is also from our side clear that we are ready to strengthen that partnership if Serbia is ready to strengthen it and we want to see areas where we can do more together. But perhaps for some of you it may not be so obvious but we have a number of very interesting practical issues cooperation areas in the pipeline that could illustrate you know how far this partnership has actually come and it may not be so much in the public domain or knowledge of knowledge and in the general public the areas of cooperation we do actually. So the Individual Partnership Action Plan has a number of priority areas and that the areas that Serbia has identified as focal focus areas for its engagement with NATO. One is the political dialogue and we value that very much and we think that it is important to also understand our mutual positions on common security threats how the effect does and how we can best address stand together.”

Kirste further added, “NATO has a very good program called Building Integrity, which attempts to build capacity in partner countries, especially by addressing corruption in the defense and security sector. Serbia is very committed member in this program. Today we are actually using Serbian experts to export knowledge and capacity in the building integrity sphere to other partners beyond the Western Balkans. So in a way now Serbia is helping NATO to transfer need to knowledge into other partners’ way beyond your Atlantic family.”
“Another very interesting project in the pipeline where NATO would potentially help
Serbia to develop more capacity to deal with unexploded ordnance in Serbia, it has an
element of capacity-building but also an element of the donation of equipment and mod-
ern technology and so all these are very tangible very practical projects that can benefit
actually many people in Serbia the servant population. Then civil emergency planning is
another mode is civilian areas in NATO that are not so well known to a lot of people so
NATO has a good coordination mechanism so that countries that are in the NATO and
partner NATO partner family help each other analyze and coordinate response and health
assistance support in the event of natural disasters, which are quite frequent in the Region
here and do affect Serbia regularly. So, Serbia has kindly offered to host our next big
EU-Atlantic disaster coordination and relief exercise which we do on the annual basis for
NATO and partner countries. It is very prestige a military exercise but of course geared
towards you know civil response, civil and military, response to natural disasters, and that
would take place next year,” said Kirste.

Kirste noted that final area of the Individual Partnership Action Plan is focused on public
diplomacy domain and that there is room for improvement, adding that “the Individual
Partnership Action Plan suggests concrete steps how the government, media, nongovern-
mental organizations, and others can contribute to a more positive image of NATO in the
country and more truthful reporting about what NATO really is and what our intentions
are.”

Knut Kirste also addressed Serbia’s cooperation with both NATO and Collective Security
Treaty Organization by stating, “being involved with the Collective Security Treaty Orga-
nization, I don’t think that in itself is a contradiction to having a strong relationship with
NATO, but of course what we sometimes see are contradictory statements about Serbia’s
relationship with the West and the East. I sometimes personally think it is for Serbia to
decide how sustainable that policy will be in the long term and as you are trying to enter
the EU, as you aspire to becoming a member the EU, and as you are seeking close rela-
tionships within the Euro-Atlantic community, not as a member of NATO but as part of
that family that represents the Euro-Atlantic community. So of course, that is for Serbia
to decide and it is for Serbia to decide where its interests lie.”

He also encouraged countries in the Region to come to terms with their pasts and fully
cooperate with international mechanisms and frameworks of transitional justice and to
be more dedicated to dealing with reconciliation, adding that NATO should also be more
involved and with better explanations and narratives.

Kirste continued with explaining the importance of cyber as one of the current priorities
of NATO in field of security. “Cyber is a very dynamic area and many of our partners
have picked up on the cybersecurity aspects rather late in their relationship with NATO
because it did not hit all countries at the same time. We still have countries for which
cyber defense is a more theoretical perspective, maybe it is lurking at the horizon, but
for other countries it has arrived and it is a daily fact. It sometimes also depends on how
vulnerable your society is in your official sector as well. Some country realized at the later stage that cybersecurity is an important issue and as we update the Individual Partnership Action Plan for Serbian authorities to decide maybe that the threat has grown and is growing and is an increasing menace to our society. Many nations in NATO now focus on that much more than in the past or in NATO for us it has become a top issue and there is much energy and effort that goes into this. Cyber is on the face of it and very compelling simple issue. It is also a no-brainer, as everyone understands why this is so important to create more resilience and to create more protection. However, the devil is in the detail, finding good mechanisms and acceptable mechanisms and to distribute responsibilities between the national and the supranational level and so. Once you get into cyber at the collective level there will be many challenges but that does not prevent NATO and Serbia in the future from developing a common agenda on cybersecurity. We would be happy to consider that if that is considered as relevant from the Serbian authorities and we have many partner mechanisms specifically tailored to partners. We feel that in this cyber world you must not create weak links and you must not allow countries to become weak because that allows those who want to use cyber threats to penetrate the NATO wall and even though NATO in Serbia is not connected, our systems are not connected, but I think the more empty white spots we leave on the map for cyber threats, the more vulnerable we get as an international community.”

Addressing relations between Russia and Serbia, as well as Russian influence in the Western Balkans Kirste said: “NATO is concerned about increasing attempts by Russia to penetrate the Region’s various countries with their own narrative about reality and about the future and about who is serving which interests. Of course we see that happening all over the place and, one of the conclusions in our report in December is to that your Atlantic community, as well as NATO, need to respond to this. We need to address this. Of course, when I say that it means based on all our democratic principles and our truthfulness and our principles to respect, the way we report, we cannot resort to the same mechanisms and instruments that Russia may choose at times in terms of public information, propaganda and so on. But I think we can have a much more proactive public information posture and that sets the strength of the record straight. Sometimes it is just presenting simple facts and I am often puzzled to hear what distortion is being portrayed. I think that these are simple things that can help to set the record straight and I think that it is our responsibility to do a better job. We are working on this together with the EU actually, which has a lot more resources. We are very mindful of this. We are concerned and we just hope that there is enough maturity in these countries and in the political leadership and the media here o be mindful and address that in the in the proper way. There is no problem when you have relations with a friendly country and you want to institutionalize that, and you have various institutions representing the shared desire to work together on common problems. We trust that the Serbian authorities will have the judgment and the understanding and the insight to make the right decision. It is not for NATO to comment. It is a sovereign decision of the Serbian government but again, as one of our close part-
ners, and a trusted partner in the international community, we hope that Serbia exercises good judgment in whatever it does.”

Kirste finalized his address by stating, “NATO is very committed to Serbia and we realize how important you are for regional security and you have a special place in this Region. I think Serbia can benefit a lot from this partnership as we have demonstrated through a lot of practical examples today. There is more potential in this partnership and it is for you to explore if you want more. Certainly NATO stands ready to work with you and to be a good partner for Serbia. A lot of countries have chosen to work with the Alliance because they felt it is in their interest and they have benefited their societies and are in a better place today than they used to be in the past. They have increased the net security for their people, they have increased stability, they have improved good neighborly relations, and they have managed a very successful transformation of their security institutions with the help of NATO. Some of them have chosen to become members of the Alliance, and others have not. Overall, all of them have concluded that their relationship to the Alliance was beneficial for them and so that is a very promising proposition for NATO and Serbia in the future.”

*Note: This paragraph contains an interview by Dr. Knut Kirste, Political Advisor for Serbia from Political Affairs and Security Policy Division, NATO Headquarters, for European Western Balkans during his participation in the conference, “Western Security Architecture and Serbia: Challenges and Dilemmas,” organized by the Center for Foreign Policy in September 2017 in Belgrade.

Dr. Knut Kirste, Political Advisor for Serbia from Political Affairs and Security Policy Division, NATO Headquarters participated as a speaker at a conference organized by the Center for Foreign Policy in September 2017. He gave an interview to the European Western Balkans (EWB) in which he spoke about IPAP, Serbian and NATO cooperation, and the importance of Serbia for security in the Western Balkans.⁸²

EWB⁸³ reminded Dr. Kirste that two years have passed since signing the IPAP and asked how he sees its results in strengthening the cooperation between Serbia and NATO and which fields saw the greatest advancements. Dr. Kirste responded, “NATO and Serbia have come a long way since we started our partnership. Serbia joined the Partnership for Peace (PfP) in 2006. Since then, our cooperation and dialogue have grown. The Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) that we agreed in January 2015 is an important tool, as it helps to structure and organize our bilateral cooperation so that NATO and Allies can support Serbia in achieving its reform goals. Our cooperation is focused on areas where Serbia wants to cooperate with NATO and where NATO can bring added value, including


⁸³ European Western Balkans.
for instance the reform of national security forces and institutions and security-related scientific cooperation.

During this period, we used the IPAP framework to enhance our practical cooperation and our political dialogue at all levels. Last November, the then Prime Minister – and now President – Vučić visited NATO Headquarters. During his visit he had a very good meeting with all of the NATO Allies Ambassadors sitting at the North Atlantic Council. We expect him back at NATO Headquarters later this year. Secretary General Stoltenberg is proud of his strong bond of friendship with Serbia. He had a productive visit to Belgrade in 2015. NATO is indeed very pleased with the progress that has been achieved so far and through our office here in Belgrade we will continue facilitating full implementation of the IPAP, further strengthening our practical cooperation and political dialogue.”

As the main areas where Serbia and NATO have potential for future cooperation, Kirste noted, “NATO and Serbia are already cooperating in different areas, including the reform of national security forces and institutions, security-related scientific cooperation, and public diplomacy. Having said that, I see a lot of potential for stronger practical and political engagement. NATO is open to this effect but it is primarily and ultimately up to Serbia to define for itself which direction our partnership takes.

We fully respect Serbia’s sovereign choice of military neutrality. This policy does not prevent us from conducting exercises together, including on disaster relief, as well as from working on making military forces interoperable, deepening the cooperation between Serbian scientists and scientists from Allied countries, or sharing strategic assessments.

One aspect where I see the potential for furthering our partnership regards joint efforts to build more stability in crisis areas. For instance, NATO and Serbia are considering working together on building the capacity of Iraqi military medical personnel. Iraq could definitely benefit from Serbia’s long-standing expertise on military medicine. We also need to work more together in the domain of public information, so that our publics can have a proper understanding about the Alliance and the nature of our partnership and misperceptions can be overcome. Our partnership can grow in ways similar to our cooperative relationship with other neutral countries, such as for instance Sweden, Finland or Austria.”

“I think that the Serbian Armed Forces has improved its level of interoperability significantly, thanks to the army’s participation in the NATO Operational Capabilities Concept. Through this programme, the Alliance sets standards for interoperability and helps partners prepare for international peacekeeping operations. Through NATO, hundreds of Serbian soldiers and officers have received training and attended capacity building course, which today help Serbia to make valuable contributions to UN and EU peacekeeping missions. Our training also helps keeping Serbian personnel safer while they are on such missions.

In addition, NATO and Serbia have more than 100 partnership activities every year. We work together on defense reform and the further strengthening of security structures.
NATO assists Serbia with the removal of dangerous surplus ammunition. Our scientists cooperate on finding innovative solutions to common security challenges. For all these reasons, I think that our partnership is solid and I expect it to further develop in the future, based on our joint interests and in accordance with Serbia’s neutral military policy. ” added Kirste.

Dr. Knut Kirste finalized his statement by expressing his opinion about the importance of Serbia for security in the Western Balkans, “Serbia is an important partner for NATO in the Balkan region and it is key for regional stability. That is why we cooperate with Serbia. Ultimately, our partnership is good for Serbia and it is good for the Alliance. Since the 1990s, NATO has invested much in the Western Balkans and the region is more stable today. This is due not least to our partnership programmes, which have promoted regional cooperation and Euro-Atlantic integration, for those who want it. Over the past decade, Slovenia, Croatia, Albania, and recently Montenegro have chosen to become members of NATO. Slovenia and Croatia have also joined the European Union. Bosnia and Herzegovina and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have applied for NATO membership. And today, all countries in the region have a clear interest in promoting regional cooperation and stability. ”

Chronology of Meetings between Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg

On November 19, 2015, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg arrived in a two-day official visit to Belgrade, welcomed by Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić. The official agenda of the visit included activities to implement the Individual Partnership Action Plan between Serbia and NATO, which is the highest level of cooperation if the state does not intend to become a member of NATO. Stoltenberg said ahead of the visit that, “Serbia and the Atlantic Alliance have a common interest to strengthen the cooperation.” This was the first visit of a NATO Secretary General to Serbia since 2007, when the previous Secretary Jap de Hop Shefer visited Belgrade.

The result of a meeting with the Prime Minister Vučić, Minister of Defense Gašić, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Dačić, was the Approval of NATO that Serbia has full control
of its airspace. In a friendly atmosphere, Stoltenberg and Vučić publicly reported that cooperation will be enhanced, with mutual respect for the military neutrality of Serbia.

“I am pleased to inform you that today the Kosovo Force is to fully relax the zone of air safety. This means that these restrictions, which were introduced in Serbia in 1999, are now abolished. Restrictions for parts of Serbian airspace now no longer apply. This is a concrete expression of improved relations between NATO and Serbia. “ This news immediately preceded speech of two interlocutors, which was announced to journalists as very important, and Vučić explained that this means that Serbia, for the first time since 1999, has no restriction in the zone of 25 kilometers in central Serbia, concerning aircraft radar placements, and control over the airspace.

The next meeting between Vučić and Stoltenberg occurred on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly, on September 20, 2016, in which they discussed the situation in the Region. Stoltenberg said that he was sorry for the innocent victims in the bombing of 1999, but he believes in the potential of cooperation with Serbia. Vučić said that Serbia wishes for better cooperation with NATO, even though Serbia is a militarily neutral country. He elaborated, explaining that Serbia is surrounded by NATO Member States and therefore must have a good cooperation with the military alliance. Vučić stressed that this must be understood since, he added, “what we all want is greater stability and economic progress and better standards of life.”

It was agreed that in the field of emergency response in 2018 Serbia and NATO will hold special mutual civil exercises. Vučić added that Serbian diplomats request the NATO Council that the Kosovo Force continues to remain in Kosovo as it protects the Serbian people there. If there was no guarantee of NATO and the Kosovo Force, Vučić noted, it would be difficult to achieve a Brussels agreement and ensure the protection of Serbian cultural heritage in Kosovo.

On January 19, 2017 Vučić and Stoltenberg met again in Davos. This discussion covered the situation in Kosovo. Vučić also discussed this theme in a telephone call with German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Topics of discussion with both parties were relations in the Region as well as ways to resolve, “accumulated problems between Prishtina and Belgrade.”

Vučić announced a meeting with the Albanian side, with the mediation of Brussels, saying, “we are ready for dialogue. We have to responsibility and intelligence overcome this

Additionally, Serbia’s cooperation with the ICTY has been assessed as unsatisfactory, since in the contempt case against three members of Serbian Radical party, Petar Jojić, Jovo Ostojić, and Vjerica Radeta, Serbia has failed to comply with its duties under the Tribunal’s Statute, and arrest them for more than two and half years.
situation. To respect agreed in Brussels, ROSU units would not be able to enter the north of Kosovo.” He said that he, “must prove that Serbs want peace,” adding, “I do not understand the desire of the Albanians to rattle weapons.”

Vučić said that he explained the Serbian perspective on the Brussels Agreement. He said that the main problems were not in the agreement itself, but in the fact that it had not been completed. Vučić stated that if Serbia fails to preserve peace in the Region, there will be a limit to progress and prosperity for Serbia.

According to an agreement between Stoltenberg and Vučić, a renewed installation of radar systems is planned for 2020. Three new radar post will be installed near the Airport Nikola Tesla, Besna Kobila Mountain, and in southwest Serbia.

**War Crimes Prosecutions: Processes in Reverse**

There have been little or no progress in the area of establishment of accountability for atrocities committed during the armed conflicts in the 1990s.

Serious problems have been identified in last several years. Firstly, the inefficiency of the Office for the War Crimes Prosecutor (OWCP) is one of the key issues (there was not even one indictment in 2015) and the trend in the number of indictments continued in 2016, with fewer inductees and fewer victims included in the indictments. There are over 800 war crimes cases that are still at the preliminary investigation stage, and according to estimations, if the OWCP continues to work at its present pace, it will solve less than 10 percent of war crimes cases over the next 10-year period.

Secondly, in nearly three years the OWCP has not issued a single indictment for crimes committed in Kosovo. Additionally, the existing problem is that there is no cooperation between Serbian OWCP with Kosovo judiciary, due to claims from the OWCP that they are unable to investigate war crimes because they cannot undertake any evidentiary actions in Kosovo.

Most indictments raised until now are against direct war crimes perpetrators (foot soldiers) and the practice of non-prosecution of perpetrators who held mid and/or senior positions in the hierarchies of former military, police, and political institutions of Serbia/ the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, has continued. Only high-ranking perpetrators charged

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85 Ibid.
thus far by the OWCP were members of the armed forces or civilian authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.  

For some high-ranked alleged perpetrators, human rights organizations and think-tanks in Serbia has expressed serious doubts that they or the forces they commanded during the conflicts, were responsible for war crimes, the Chief of Staff of Serbian Army, general Ljubiša Diković being one of them, or former MP from riling Serbian Progressive Party, retired general, Momir Stojanović.

After year and a half without Chief War Crimes Prosecutor, in May 2017, Serbian National Assembly appointed Snežana Stanojković, one of the Deputies of the War Crimes Prosecutor to the position. The appointment of Stanojković has been assessed as political, since with regards to other candidates (in the first round) she is one of the least experienced persons for that position. Additionally, Stanojković’s Prosecutorial plan and strategy that was presented to the Assembly in 2016 is highly problematic for several reasons. Firstly, she announced that she will focus on cases where Serbs were victims (Croatia, Kosovo) and announced that she will indict persons for these crimes even in absentia, all of which is highly problematic. The conflicts in the former Yugoslavia were regional and majority of perpetrators of crimes against Serbs are not Serbian citizens or residing in Serbia. Secondly, trials in absentia for war crimes have been long abandoned practice and are not considered as just. Finally, Stanojković is obviously biased – she announced that she will focus on Serbian victims instead of Serbian perpetrators, which is highly problematic from the perspective of transitional justice and the process of establishing accountability and securing the acknowledgment for victims’ suffering.

Additionally, Serbia’s cooperation with the ICTY has been assessed as unsatisfactory, since in the contempt case against three members of Serbian Radical party, Petar Jojić, Jovo Ostojić, and Vjerica Radeta, Serbia has failed to comply with its duties under the Tribunal’s Statute, and arrest them for more than two and half years.  

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86 Ibid.  
87 Ibid.  
Finally, in June 2017, both President of the ICTY Agius and Chief Prosecutor Brammertz, addressed the Security Council of the ICTY. Chief Prosecutor Brammertz was surprisingly harsh in his assessment of the process in Serbia and in the Region regarding war crimes prosecutions – he stated that “regional judicial cooperation in war crimes justice in the former Yugoslavia is heading in the wrong direction.” In addressing the overall atmosphere with regards to the judicially established facts before the ICTY, Prosecutor Brammertz stated: “The message of denial and revisionism is loud and clear. We recognize our victims, but not yours. Your war criminals are our heroes. (...) When irresponsible officials use division, discrimination and hate to secure power, conflict and atrocities can gain logic of their own. That was true two decades ago when the genocide and ethnic cleansing began, and it remains true today. With the closure of the ICTR, and the upcoming closure of the ICTY, it is now more important than ever to address this challenge. To secure a peaceful future, there must be a shared agreement on the recent past.”

Setbacks due to the Politicization of Ethnicity in Serbia

The Status of Political Parties of National Minorities in Serbia

The backbone of legal regulations on the realization and protection of minority rights consists of two laws: the Law on the Protection of National Minorities (Law on National Minorities) and the Law on National Councils of National Minorities (Law on National Councils). Provisions of the Law on National Minorities rely on European standards of protection of national minorities, with the influence of Europe’s Framework Convention being clearly visible. The Law has formally improved the system of protection of minorities in Serbia primarily by defining the concept of national minorities, establishing basic rights to preserve specificities of national minorities, and introducing the institute of national councils of national minorities into the legal system of Serbia. When defining the term national minority, the legislature opted for a descriptive definition without exhaustively listing which national minorities enjoy the protection of the law. Gaining the status of a national minority is linked by the law to the following attributes: citizenship, numerical inferiority (but still sufficiently representative in number), and distinct ethnic, religious, linguistic or similar attributes, as well as interest of the members to preserve and maintain their common identity (Article 2, paragraph 1). With such an “open” definition, the law has adopted a liberal model and allows every “ethnic group” that meets the abovementioned criteria to have the status of national minority. However, in accordance with the freedom of ethnic self-determination, we should bear in mind that possessing the

said attributes at the individual level does not automatically lead to belonging to a national minority, because every person has the right to decide whether they want to be treated as a member of a national minority or not.

The complicated structure of the councils of national minorities often provokes controversy, is a present source of corruption, and generally does not contribute to the improvement of the position of minorities, but rather serves ethno clientalism. In parallel with this, Serbia also provides benefits for minority parties to enter the parliament with a natural threshold that represents the number of valid votes in the election divided by the number of seats in the parliament, which is 250. It is absurd that most of the minority parties, primarily the Hungarian and Bosnian minority parties, are on the list of the ruling Progressive party, and rarely address minorities issues. Their position in this way misses the point and is used for higher insecure.

The Republic Electoral Commission attempted, in the 2016 electoral cycle, to defend the view that a minority party can be considered the one that is proven to promote and advocate in practice the interests of a certain minority group. Regarding this issue, the Republic Electoral Commission analyzed the speeches of leaders, read the statutes, and analyzed media archive of public appearances of people who were tied to this party. On the other hand, the Administrative Court took a different view and in several cases overthrew the decisions of the Republic Electoral Commission, because it accepted as the only authoritative thing whether the Ministry of State Administration and Local Self-Government, which keeps the register of parties, allowed someone to be registered as a minority party or not. And thus, on the one hand, the Administrative Court did great harm to the true minority parties that advocate for the defense of values and interests of a certain minority group, and on the other hand, it created huge benefits for someone. It is necessary to improve the existing legal framework when it comes to minority parties. Also, it is crucial to provide incentives for public and expert’s debates about forthcoming changes of the Serbian Constitution and consider supporting creation of an electoral system in Serbia that would reduce the effects of the de facto parallel political system of national councils of national minorities.

CEAS believes that the existing obviously non-functioning system of protection and positive discrimination of ethnic minorities in Serbia that is the source of corruption and ethno-entrepreneurship and other non-democratic and illiberal practices severely impedes chances for the emergence of liberal globalist Euro-Atlantic forces in Serbia. Serbia is a full fledged member of all relevant organizations which have rigid treaties about protection of minorities. With proper enforcement of rule of law in Serbia this would be sufficient and efficient.
chances for the emergence of liberal globalist Euro-Atlantic forces in Serbia. Serbia is a full fledged member of all relevant organizations which have rigid treaties about protection of minorities. With proper enforcement of rule of law in Serbia this would be sufficient and efficient.

**Attempted Weaponization of Hungarians in Serbia**

*Note: The following paragraph CEAS presents, “Hungarian Irredentism as a Threat to Stable Inter-ethnic Relations,” by Vladimir Ilić, Chairman of the Board of Centre for Development of Civil Society (CDCS), published by CDCS on June 6, 2017.*

Center for Development of Civil Society (CDCS), within its continuous monitoring of the rights of national minorities in Serbia, believes that it is necessary to draw attention to the following:

The Officials of Hungary have issued statements that destabilize inter-ethnic relations in the Region. These statements have been further radicalized by the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians, which is the part of the ruling coalition in the National Assembly and the part of the Government of Serbia, represented with several state secretaries. Serbian government, under whose control are the media in Serbia, has not responded to this. Accordingly, in the media, this trend is not mentioned.

The lack of reaction of the Serbian Government and the Serbian public to this provocation is concerning. In the case of adverse developments in the process of Pannonian basin, the cost, as so many times before, is likely to be paid by members of the Hungarian minority. Their rights and their real position are irresponsibly being threatened by the acts of the Budapest Government, failure to act by the government in Belgrade, as well as by their most influential political party in Serbia, the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians.

Mr. János Lázár, the minister in charge of managing the Office of the Prime Minister of Hungary said on May 31 in Mako, that the Trianon trauma “does not only have victims but also perpetrators, accomplices and beneficiaries. Monuments to their responsibilities, monuments of apologies are not found in Paris, among the castles of Versailles, not in the Felvidék, Erdély, Partium, Délvidék and the Transcarpathian”. Mr. Lázár stressed that the former Allied powers did not apologize to Hungarians and showed no signs of dealing with the past. Mr. Lázár said that Hungary did not require a revision of borders, nor a “return of the land”.

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On the same occasion, Deputy Prime Minister of Hungary, Mr. Zsolt Semjén said that “Trianon tragedy happened because the government that came into power did not consider the existence of national value and deliberately wrecked the army, government and paralyzed defensive reflex of the Hungarian nation.”

In the appearances of the Hungarian Ministers, evident is the chauvinistic stereotypical representation of their own nation as only the victims, but by no means as executors. The ministers did not mention the defeat of the Hungarian army on the Volga and the Don, where Hungary had fought as an ally of Hitler. Neither did they mention the mass physical extermination of Hungarian Jews and Roma under the rule of Ferenc Szálasi, during previous attempts to correct the “injustice of Trianon”.

At the central event on the occasion of celebrating the Day of National Unity, held on 3 June 2017 in Bački Vinogradi, there were present Dr. Pintér Attila, Hungarian Ambassador in Belgrade, Dr. Babity János, General Consul of Hungary in Subotica, Mr. Pásztor István, in the capacity of the President of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians, and Mr. Hajnal Jenő, the President of the Hungarian National Council.

Mr. Dudás Károly, the president of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians, on this occasion said that the root of the apple trees, which were planted in Bački Vinogradi in 2012, was a symbol of Hungarian unity, and that the fruits were the nation’s symbol of renewal. Mr. Dudás called an apple “our sacred fruit, which reminds us of where our home is, where our homeland is and if we get lost, it helps us to get back home.”

The statement of Mr. Dudás of Hungary as a homeland (rather than a mother-country) of Vojvodina Hungarians is openly irredentist. Mr. Pásztor, the President of the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, found it necessary to react to the statement that derogates Vojvodina and which denies the territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia. Mr. Pásztor, the President of the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, since 2014 to today has occasionally used the irredentist term “Délvidék” for the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina.

CDCS has every moral right to talk about the revival of Hungarian irredentism (among Hungarians in Vojvodina), as CDCS was the first, in 2002, to publish texts in Serbo-Cro-
atan, Hungarian and English about the pogrom of Vojvodina Hungarians in 1944. CDCS was also the first to inform the Serbian public and international public about mass incidents against ethnic minorities, including Hungarian minorities, from 2003-2005. CDCS dealt specifically with anti-Hungarian outbursts in Temerin, which lasted until February 2013.

Now CDCS warns the public that the behavior of the Hungarian Government, the absence of the reaction of the Government of Serbia, and the behavior of the leadership of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians and the Hungarian National Council, all lead to a deterioration of international relations, consequently, a possible deterioration of the situation of the Hungarian minority in Vojvodina, particularly in areas where ethnic Hungarians make up a minority of the total population. In these areas, there are about two-fifths of the total number of Vojvodina Hungarians.
10. **Kosovo: Key Obstacles to the Stabilization and Democratization**

**General Information and Short Background**

Kosovo covers 10,908 km and has an estimated resident population of 1,815,606 inhabitants composed of Kosovo Albanian (92%), Kosovo Serbs (4%), and other minorities, such as Bosnians, Gorani, Turks, Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptians (4%).

The Kosovo War lasted from March 1998 until June 1999. It was fought by the forces of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which controlled Kosovo before the war, and the Kosovo Albanian rebel group known as the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), with air support from NATO and ground support from the Albanian army. The war ended with the Kumanovo Treaty, in which Yugoslav and Serb forces agreed to withdraw from Kosovo to make way for an international presence. Four years later, Kosovo declared independence from Serbia. That year, Serbia sought international validation and support for its stance that the declaration of independence was illegal at the International Court of Justice. On July 22, 2010, the court delivered its advisory opinion; by a vote of 10 to 4 it declared that, “the adoption of the declaration of independence of February 17, 2008 did not violate general international law because international law contains no ‘prohibition on declarations of independence.’” The declaration of independence also did not violate United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244, as the resolution did not describe Kosovo’s final status and the Security Council did not reserve for itself the decision on final status. The Republic of Kosovo is formally recognized by 114 United Nations Member States, including 23 EU Member States.

The Ahtisaari Plan has had the greatest impact on the creation of Kosovo’s institutions. It served as a basis for the declaration of independence and for the continuing role of international organizations, including the International Civilian Office of the EU Special Representative, and the EU Rule of Law Mission, in Kosovo. While the Ahtisaari Plan was implemented in southern Region, including in several municipalities with non-Albanian majorities, the north remained outside of the scope of Kosovo’s institutions and international organizations. The Plan includes a formula, which allows Kosovo Serbs to have their own local institutions and communal life with continued linkages to Serbia within

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the framework of a multi-ethnic state. Specifically, it allows new Serb-majority municipalities, including North Mitrovica, to retain important elements of self-rule in health, education and social sectors, in addition to the ability to choose the local police chief.97

One of the basic elements of the Ahtisaari Plan is the politicization of ethnicity within Kosovo’s institutions. The politicization of ethnicity is non-liberal by nature and can be exploited in varying geopolitical circumstances with potentially dangerous results. Other regional actors amplify these issues. For example, the regional branch of Sputnik spreads of ethnic stereotypes and false narratives to encourage hatred among ethnic groups. Recently, it has accused Croatian and Montenegrin minority communities in Kosovo of advocating for the formation of the Armed Forces of Kosovo.98 A debate about this topic in the Kosovo parliament clearly demonstrated the abuse of the Serb community.99

Kosovo’s security sector faces many challenges, including the consequences of political instability, lack of separation of powers, and lack of accountability. This is exemplified in the findings of the European Commission Progress Report in 2016. “Due to the political impasse and the boycotts in parliament, there has been limited progress in the work of the parliamentary committee on internal affairs, security and supervision of both the Kosovo Security Forces and the oversight committee for Kosovo’s Intelligence Agency. The parliamentary committee organized hearings on the laws pertaining to police and civil registry but did not exercise any oversight on expenditure, including expenditure by the Kosovo Security Forces. Close ties between individual parliamentarians of the relevant committees and the leadership of the Kosovo Security Forces continue to hinder independent oversight. The vetting process continued to improve, but is still carried out by the Intelligence Agency rather than a separate body.”

In addition, a March 2017 study released that “…the highest values of trust are enjoyed by the KSF (3.74%) and the Kosovo Police (3.65%). Meanwhile, the obviously low levels of trust (under 2.40%) during this period were recorded by six institutions: KIA100 (2.39%), President (2.22%), Director of KIA (2.14%), and the Parliamentary Commission on Intelligence (2.10%), Minister of Internal Affairs (2.06%), and Prime Minister (2.00%). Thus, only the KSF and the Kosovo Police enjoy a considerable trust, meanwhile, the above mentioned institutions are quite poor on trust, and the other two (Minister of KSF [2.88%] and the Parliamentary Commission on Security, Internal Affairs and the Oversight of the KSF [2.45%]) remain with average values of trust.”

98 A Secret Recipe for the Kosovo Army: They are inventing a minority to get the majority. Sputnik. August 2017. Available at: https://rs.sputniknews.com/politika/201708241112405758-kosovo-crnogorci-srbi-vojska-kosova-milo-taci/.
99 Director of the Serbian Government’s Office for Kosovo and Metohija Marko Đurić said that members of the Kosovo Assembly from the Serb List will prevent the formation of a Kosovo army and that its establishment requires four out of ten Serbian votes, which must not be allowed. B92. May 2017. Available at: http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics.php?yyyy=2017&mm=05&dd=22&nav_id=101331.
100 Kosovo Intelligence Agency.
Basic Facts about Kosovo and NATO

*Note: For the purpose of this report, CEAS commissioned local experts to contribute their perspectives. The following sections were written by Astrit Istrefi, Executive Director of the Balkan Forum from Kosovo.

NATO has been present in Kosovo through its Kosovo Peace Implementation Force (KFOR), since June 12, 1999, following eleven weeks of NATO air strikes on security and military facilities in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and after NATO and Yugoslav authorities signed an agreement in Kumanovo, Macedonia. The NATO intervention in Kosovo came after all diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis failed, and Yugoslav authorities refused to sign the so-called Rambouillet Agreement. The NATO intervention in Kosovo was the Alliance’s largest military operation ever undertaken; the first time in its history to undertake such an operation outside of its borders to protect its founding values; and the first time that the Alliance used force against a sovereign state, without a United Nations mandate, to stop a humanitarian tragedy, specifically massacres and forced expulsions.

Since then, NATO has been a part of the international community’s reconstruction/rebuilding, disarmament-demobilization-reintegration, rule of law, security and public order, protection of minorities and heritage sites, border security, return or relocation of displaced persons and refugees, and other political, economic and social efforts in Kosovo. This includes support in the development of Kosovo’s security structures, and tasks related to the dissolution of the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC) as well as the establishment of the Kosovo Security Force (KSF) and a civilian structure to oversee the KSF.

As a result of the improved security situation since 1999, NATO presence on the ground has been scaled down significantly, from an initial force of approximately 50,000 troops

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103 NATO progress report in October 2000 estimated that over 1,300,000 refugees have returned to their homes and villages: 810,000 from Albania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and other countries around the world, and 550,000 internally displaced within Kosovo. Available at: [http://www.nato.int/kosovo/repo2000/progress.htm](http://www.nato.int/kosovo/repo2000/progress.htm).

104 The war ended after NATO bombed Serbia for 11 weeks to compel it to withdraw forces who had killed some 10,000 Albanian civilians in counterinsurgency operations. Available at: [http://www.voanews.com/a/kosovo-serbia-strain-ex-prime-ministers-arrest/3664727.html](http://www.voanews.com/a/kosovo-serbia-strain-ex-prime-ministers-arrest/3664727.html).

105 The KSF is as a professional, multi-ethnic, lightly-armed force. Its basic missions include crisis response, assistance to civilian authorities in responding to natural and other disasters, Explosive Ordnance Disposal and civilian protection tasks. Available at: KFOR ‘‘placemat’’ (Contributing nations and troop numbers) - February 2017 (PDF/437Kb) accessed on 29 March 2017. Available at: [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_48818.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_48818.htm).
to a current total strength of 4,273. Such a reduction has been implemented hand-in-hand with the transfer of responsibility for the security of cultural and religious sites in Kosovo from KFOR to the Kosovo Police. The NATO peacekeeping force in Kosovo continues to fulfill its mission of ensuring a climate of peace and security.

Security System Structures

The first security system structure, the Kosovo police, was formed 1999 in the aftermath of the armed conflict between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and NATO. The NATO air campaign against Federal Republic of Yugoslavia affected the withdrawal of the Yugoslav armed forces from Kosovo. As of February 2008, when Kosovo declared independence, the force became a governmental agency. Before, it was subordinated to the United Nations Mission in Kosovo Police, and the police commissioner retained command authority over both the international police and the Kosovo police. The Kosovo police are perceived as the most trusted rule of law institution. Its numbers have grown steadily to 9,500 in 2016, of whom approximately 84 % are Kosovo Albanians and 15 % are Kosovo Serbs, with the remainder coming from other communities. There are 530 police officers per 100,000 inhabitants, a similar ratio to other countries in the Region. The KSF was established in January 2009, following the declaration of independence on February 17, 2008 and entry into force of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo. The KSF is a professional, lightly-armed, multi-ethnic force that is subject to democratic, civilian control exercised through the Ministry for the KSF that is accountable to the Kosovo Assembly. NATO has supervised the establishment and training of the KSF’s total strength of 2,500 active personnel and 800 reservists. One of the initial tasks of the KSF is to provide assistance to civil authorities in responding to natural and other disasters and emergencies, including as part of a regional or international response effort. The KSF has not yet reached full alignment with NATO doctrines and standards related to disaster and emergency response.

106 Ibid.
108 After the conflict ended in 1999, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1244, which established the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), which included a large international policing component, called the UNMIK Police. One of the primary tasks was establishing a new police force (Kosovo Police).
The transformation of the KSF into a fully-fledged army has yet to take place. International administrations maintained executive authority over Kosovo’s security and justice, the transfer of which became more rapid following Kosovo’s independence in 2008 and the end of supervised independence in 2012.

Beside KP and KSF, the most important security agencies are: the Kosovo Intelligence Agency (KIA), established in 2009, and the Emergency Management Agency.114

**Democratic Oversight of the Security System**

Civilian oversight of the security forces in Kosovo through parliamentary bodies is exercised by two committees: the Committee on Internal Affairs, Security and Supervision of the Kosovo Security Force, and the Oversight Committee for Kosovo Intelligence Agency.115 These two bodies were among the newly established security and justice institutions and policies as part of the state-building process which also involved creating new institutions and going through a lengthy process involving the transfer of power from international administration, including the United Nations Mission in Kosovo and the EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, to Kosovo’s institutions.

**Agency for Emergency Management**

The Agency for Emergency Management was established as an independent body within the Ministry of Internal Affairs based on Law No. 04/L-230 of the Republic of Kosovo. The Agency acts under the direct authority of the Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and conducts activities in building, protection, advancement, and promotion of general security in the field of emergency management, and provides professional services too.116

The Agency’s constitutive and related documents indicate that it, “is organized in the central and local level. The Agency performs managerial and technical duties for the protection against natural and other disasters. The Agency’s mission is to support the citizens and the first responders to ensure that it works as a body in order to develop, maintain, and advance its capacity to prepare, defend, react, and recover from all possible hazards, be they those natural or caused by the human factor.” The Agency:

- advises on the norms of construction and management of urban and non-urban spaces;

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teaches people how to deal with disasters;
- helps build and equip emergency and local emergency services;
- coordinates disaster response;
- provides assistance to municipalities, communities, businesses and individuals in case of disasters;
- trains emergency managers;
- supports firefighting service; and
- manages the entire disaster cycle.”

In addition, the Agency cooperates with international organizations of the same field and with other foreign institutions, in accordance with the legislation in force and on the basis of bilateral and multilateral international agreements, and if necessary can accept foreign officials, respectively send its officials on a temporary service for the purpose of performing duties in the field of emergency.117

**Key Security Issues**

Key security issues in Kosovo include political crises, widespread discontent with corruption and organized crime, tension with Serbia and in the north of Kosovo including as a result of the continued existence of the Serbia-run parallel structures, Russian influence in Kosovo and its increasingly assertive role in the Western Balkans.

After continuous limitation of government legitimacy, a political crisis in Kosovo escalated after parliamentary elections held on June 11, 2017 which hopefully ended with formation of Haradinaj government in September 9th 2017. Besides, there is strong disapproval by the opposition parties118 of: 1) any executive powers for the Association/Community of Serb Municipalities in the north of Kosovo, claiming that such powers would be in direct violation with the Constitution of Kosovo; would create a dysfunctional state, and a Republika Srpska within Kosovo,119 2) implementation of any demarcation agreement between Kosovo and neighboring Montenegro that would deprive Kosovo of part of its territory, and 3) the continuation of the EU-facilitated dialogue with Serbia at a time when Serbia continues to provoke120 the situation in Kosovo regularly. Public reaction to these issues, demonstrated through massive protests and results of opinion surveys, show that the public attitude is largely aligned with the opposition.

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Widespread corruption and organized crime, as well as limited progress in effectively curbing these issues, is holding back Kosovo’s progress towards visa liberalization. Transparency International findings rank Kosovo 95th among 176 countries in its Corruption Perception Index from 2016. A score of 36 followed by Macedonia with 37 and both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania at 39, makes Kosovo the most corrupt country in the Western Balkans. As discussed earlier, the European Commission Progress reports and statements by the EU parliament raise concerns about the prevalence and limited progress in Kosovo on these issues.

The lack of economic opportunity is a main factor in crime trends. The KP has identified widespread criminal activities and crime trends such as organized criminal groups, serious crimes such as murders by or for the interest of organized criminal groups, trafficking, human trafficking and especially migrant trafficking, corruption, money laundering, increasing cybercrimes, the use of narcotics, and violent radicalism and extremism.

Tension with Serbia and in the north of Kosovo also remains an issue. The latest incidents include a train, which was painted with the Serbian flag, “Kosovo is Serbia” in twenty languages, and Christian Orthodox images, was scheduled to leave Belgrade and arrive in Mitrovica, in the north of Kosovo; Ramush Haradinaj was arrest in France based on an arrest warrant by Serbia issued in 2004; and a senior KP official was arrested in Serbia. Tensions escalated in December 2016 when Serbs in north Mitrovica constructed a two-meter high concrete wall near the bridge that ethnically divides the city.

Russian influence in Kosovo and its increasingly assertive role in the Region is also a challenge. Russia, an ally to Serbia and one of the global players, has traditionally been

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supportive of Serbia’s position towards Kosovo including at the United Nations Security Council and in other international forums. Both countries have reacted to the Kosovo government’s plans to transform its voluntary, lightly-armed security force into a fully-fledged army. Such concerted reactions add to tensions between Kosovo and Serbia, while Russia’s donation of fighter jets, tanks, and combat vehicles to Serbia potentially aggravates them.

Russia continues its strong opposition to NATO expansion in the Western Balkans, and to Montenegro’s NATO membership, claiming that a potential expansion by the Alliance to include Montenegro, Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina is among the biggest Western threats to Russia. Moreover, allegations over Russia’s coup plot in Montenegro and its support for Ivanov’s decision in Macedonia not to allow the formation of the government by the opposition and Albanian parties including its accusations towards the EU and United States due to their alleged support for separatist movements in Macedonia, are a clear demonstration of Russia’s renewed interest and influence in individual countries and the Region as a whole. In addition, there are fears that if tensions continue to mount between Kosovo and Serbia, Russia could use them to engineer a full-blown crisis in the future.

Key Issues for the Kosovo Security Forces

According to a former NATO Secretary General statement, the KSF reached its full operational capability in 2013. The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo allows for the KSF role and mission to be revised after five years of its establishment.

The annual KSF budget accounts for an approximately 65 million euros, or 0.89% of Kosovo’s GDP. While 2013 and 2014 data indicate participation of 9% ethnic minorities in the KSF, including 55 Turks, 42 Serbs, 49 Bosnians, and 56 other ethnic minorities, this is not considered to be sufficient. A December 2016 public opinion survey revealed that the KSF maintains a significantly high public trust recorded at 72%. However, this varies between Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs with the former having very high levels of trust while the latter very low levels of trust in the KSF.


A recent initiative by the President of Kosovo calls for the transformation of the KSF into a fully-fledged army has been endorsed by the government of Kosovo and the majority of Kosovo’s political spectrum. However, the United States and NATO conveyed serious concerns and indicated that they will reevaluate their assistance to the KSF should the Kosovo government proceed with such plans by making amendments to an existing law rather than an inclusive process of constitutional change. Such plans are opposed by Kosovo Serb parties, the Serbian government, and the Russian government. NATO’s reaction to such plans has been considered as a victory for Serbia.

The proposed amendments would allow Kosovo to increase its number of soldiers and buy heavy weapons, essentially transforming its current NATO-established and trained force into a national army. Constitutional amendments, however, would provide an opportunity to the Kosovo Serb parties represented in the Kosovo Assembly to have their say. The Kosovo government tried this approach in the past, but Serbian deputies said they would block it.

These plans are being pursued by the Kosovo government as tensions in the Western Balkans are on the rise, including Russia’s increasingly assertive role in the Region and its donations of modern weapons and other military equipment to Serbia.
Radical Islamization in Kosovo and Consequences of ISIS Recruiting

Violent extremism and radicalization has been recognized as a highly complex global threat. Often used phrases such as “radical Islamization in Kosovo” could be perceived as problematic in the way it is framed, as sounding journalistic, sensational, and easily perceived as biased. This because the terminology, and even semantics, on and related to these issues has been used and abused by different actors, and led to more controversies and polarization than to better social/political cohesion and/or understanding. In addition, there is an ongoing debate regarding the degree of: a) unbiased and credible evidence-based analysis and research on these issues that look into the factors, actors, and dynamics, and b) whether and how they inform the development of effective preventative policies, strategies, and measures around the globe.

However, assuming that this label is rather with reference to violent extremism and radicalization in Kosovo, and linked to ISIS, it would require deeper, comprehensive analysis and research on these massively un-researched issues that are currently part of the public/political discourse and are framing local, national, regional, and international/global politics, agendas, and reactions, including geo-political. But, while violent extremism and radicalization is seen from different perspectives and interpreted in many different ways by local, national, regional, and international/global actors, they all recognize the threat, as they do the implications in societies and states across the globe. The United States Department of State, Bureau of Diplomatic Security’s Kosovo Crime and Safety Report for 2016 recognizes terrorism as a threat as in other European nations. It states, ”Kosovo has seen a rise in Islamic extremism in recent years. In the summer of 2014, police arrested over 60 individuals on suspicion of participating in or supporting the fighting in Syria and Iraq. A number of citizens have traveled to Syria and Iraq to fight with terrorist organizations.”

Kosovo, too, witnessed a reaction to these issues by its public, government, and international actors, including the international presence in Kosovo. For example, Kosovo’s strategy on the prevention of violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism for the period 2015 to 2020, notes that, “currently, the biggest threat appears to be the so called ISIS that is based in Syria and Iraq; however this is not the first, nor shall it be...”


the last threat of such nature, which the contemporary world is likely to face.” It also highlights that, “some Kosovo citizens have been lured by radicalization messages and joined and fought alongside extremist and terrorist groups, and in many cases such individuals returned to Kosovo after participating in, or committing criminal offences based on their ideals.” The Kosovo’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirms violent extremism and radicalization to be a serious challenge for Kosovo’s internal security and foreign policy, but also states that, “the financial crisis and the EU enlargement fatigue have changed the political prospects in the EU and NATO countries. The rise of the European extreme right parties and their parliamentary influence, changing discourse of the European media, but also the deliberate Serbian propaganda that for twenty years has been promoting false danger of, ‘a Muslim triangle Bosnia, Sandžak, and Kosovo,’ may endanger Kosovo’s journey towards Euro-Atlantic integration.”

In terms of socioeconomic and political factors, and motivations, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, in its working paper 875, notes that, “condemnation of the Assad regime’s brutality against civilians is likely to have had particular resonance in Kosovo, given its own recent history of oppression and war under the Milošević regime. Not only are several issues from the 1998/1999 Kosovo war still unresolved (including hundreds of people missing, resources disputed, and innumerable other transitional justice issues open), the war remains alive in the popular consciousness through monuments, commemorative events and daily references. In seeking to understand why people travelled from Kosovo to Syria in 2012/2013, it seems logical to take into account the many claims from Syria travellers and their families: that, in the international setting of the time, some went to Syria to help civilians, other Muslims, and descendants of Albanians.” Other sources note unemployment and low trust in government institutions and politicians; the isolation of Kosovo’s youth, and the EU’s failure to enact visa liberalization for Kosovo, which compounds their sense of isolation; weak state structures due to political instability, corruption, and incompetence; Serbia’s political obstructionism exacerbating frustrations; and unmet popular expectations. The Kosovo Violent Extremism Risk Assessment for

Whatever controversies, differences, and gaps in the analysis between government, academia, journalists, practitioners, and publics across the globe in terms of factors and motivations and which social groups, countries, and regions are more vulnerable to exploitation by violent groups, there seems to be a growing agreement among them that hard security approach to violent extremism and radicalization and oversimplifying conflicts is inadequate to yield positive outcomes, thus drawing lessons learned and taking a holistic approach is a necessity to building just, peaceful, and inclusive societies.

April and May 2015 by the United States Agency for International Development notes that, “despite being recognized by approximately 100 countries, Kosovo still lacks full integration into the international community; travel is severely restricted within the Region and slow economic development. This is felt keenly by many Kosovars.”

Whatever controversies, differences, and gaps in the analysis between government, academia, journalists, practitioners, and publics across the globe in terms of factors and motivations and which social groups, countries, and regions are more vulnerable to exploitation by violent groups, there seems to be a growing agreement among them that hard security approach to violent extremism and radicalization and over-simplifying conflicts is inadequate to yield positive outcomes, thus drawing lessons learned and taking a holistic approach is a necessity to building just, peaceful, and inclusive societies.

The Establishment and Full Operationalization of the Special Chambers and Special Prosecutor’s Office

The United States, EU and United Nations have firmly pushed for the establishment and full operationalization of the Special Chambers and Special Prosecutor’s Office. They were established following two attempts by the Kosovo Assembly and plenty of international pressure due to widespread resentment in Kosovo and serious disagreements across the political spectrum. They are part of the judicial system of Kosovo, established by a constitutional amendment and law adopted by the Kosovo Assembly that also allows for the relocation of the proceedings in The Hague, the Netherlands, where they have a seat staffed with international judges, prosecutors, and officers.

However, many in Kosovo see the Special Court as an insult to the Kosovo Liberation Army’s wartime struggle against repressive Serbian rule, which saw some 13,000 people killed, mostly Kosovo Albanians, and one million expelled, while 1,666 people are still listed as missing, as the court will try serious crimes allegedly committed by members of the Kosovo Liberation Army against ethnic minorities and political opponents. In contrast, in Serbia, the court has wide support due to hopes that it will prosecute crimes against Serbs.

139 Shouldn’t you be Countering Violent Extremism?. Written by Larry Attree. SaferWorld. Available at: https://saferworld-indepth.squarespace.com/.


The effects of these institutions, which are expected to be fully judicially operational and ready to conduct judicial proceedings soon, has yet to be known and felt. However, given the nature of the alleged crimes and the profiles of the perpetrators, protests are likely to reemerge.

**Setbacks due to the Politicization of Ethnicity in Kosovo**

Kosovo is one of the Western Balkans countries still struggling to build up an efficient administration and basic constitutional arrangements. This problem stems mainly from the complicated status arrangements mandated by the Ahtisaari Plan, which also embedded politicization of ethnicities into the foundations of Kosovo system.

Recent difficulties with composition of the Kosovo Parliament and Government showed serious flaws in the electoral system. Latest Constitutional Court rulings demonstrate that the electoral system was essentially designed for the two parties system, with ambiguous rulings and bylaws.

**Attempted Weaponization of Serbs in Kosovo**

Seats reserved for ethnic minorities, created in good faith, are not turning out to be a way to protect multiculturalism in Kosovo. Instead, they are a permanent source of corruption and political ethno-entrepreneurship. The situation is even more complicated in case of the seats reserved for the Serb minority. Most of those seats usually go to lists which, in one way or the other, cooperate with the Serbian Government in Belgrade. As the new Haradinaj coalition demonstrates, those lists remain in direct communication with the Serbian Government and seem to acknowledge its authority in some way. Belgrade continues to see such lists as priority in its policy towards Kosovo, as recently demonstrated by Mr as Marko Đurić, Director of the Office for Kosovo and Metohija, who openly stated “Serbian List is project of national interest”. Apart from blurring lines of authority, this sometimes leads to unclear lines of financing.
Oddly enough Serbian list got support from Russia’s ruling party United Russia. President of the Serb List Goran Rakić and Director of the Office for Kosovo and Metohija Marko Đuric will meet in Moscow on September 14th with a high delegation of the United Russia, and on that occasion, among other things they will discuss the upcoming local elections in Kosovo and Metohija.

life based on their ideological preferences, not on the basis of their ethnicity.

The recent attempt of the Kosovo leaders to actualize transformation of the Kosovo Security Forces into an army was not well received by the political West, which made it clear that the international community expects the process to be done via a constitutional procedure where Serb MP’s have a power of veto. Depending on political developments in both countries, Serb representatives can be “weaponized” to block or corrupt that process. Because of their clientelistic relations with various Serbian state actors, there might be circumstances where they can be used for the same purposes by other actors as well.146 The same goes for other minority seats in the AoK.

The long overdue establishment of the Association/Community of Serb Municipalities in the north of Kosovo, depending on its founding documents, can also become an instrument of Serbia’s influence. Last, a usually neglected mechanism which can also be used as a weapon is the unclear and not clearly regulated flow of money between Kosovo and Serbia, both between businesses and state entities. Structures such as the Association of Serb Municipalities should be provided with clear procedures, and not left to implementation “in good faith” as there is almost none. Clear financial procedures in general are also a long overdue element of normalization of relations.

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146 Rakic: Serbian list is grateful for support of the United Russia. Blic September 2017. Available at http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/rakic-srpska-lista-zahvalna-na-podrsci-jedinstvene-rusije/r37lv46

11. Bosnia and Herzegovina: Key Obstacles to the Stabilization and Democratization

General Information and Short Background

Bosnia and Herzegovina occupies 51,129 square kilometers and has 3.8 million inhabitants. The state declared independence from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on March 1, 1992, triggering a secessionist bid by the country’s Serbs citizens, who were backed by Belgrade. This result in the three and a half year-long Bosnian War, which left nearly 100,000 people dead.

The General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, also known as the Dayton Peace Agreement, Dayton Accords, Paris Protocol, or Dayton-Paris Agreement, is the peace agreement reached at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base near Dayton, Ohio in the United States, in November 1995, and formally signed in Paris on December 14, 1995. The current Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina is the Annex 4 of the Dayton Peace Agreement.148

Bosnia and Herzegovina is home to one of the world’s most complicated systems of government. The agreement achieved its immediate purpose of ending the bloodshed, but it froze its ethnic divisions in place. As a result, governance is extremely complex, opaque, and difficult.149

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Bosnia and Herzegovina comprises two entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska. The main cities in the Federation are the capital Sarajevo, and the cities of Mostar, Tuzla, Bihać, and Zenica, while in the Republika Srpska entity, the main cities are Banja Luka, Bijeljina, Prijedor, and Trebinje. Formally part of both entities is the Brčko District, a multi-ethnic self-governing administrative unit.

Within this system, there is a constant tug-of-war over competing aspirations. Republika Srpska seeks greater autonomy, while Croat parties advocate for a third entity, while several Bosniak parties pursue a more centrally-governed country.

The Federation is predominantly Bosniak, religiously Muslims, and Croat, religiously Catholics, while the Republika Srpska is Serb, religiously Orthodox. The largest minorities are the Roma and Jewish communities. The most recent census, completed in 2013, has yet to be fully completed, but according to the CIA World Factbook, the composition of the population is approximately 48% Bosniak, 37.1% Serb, 14.3% Croat, and 0.6% other.

The government is multi-tiered, involving several bodies at both the state and entity-level. The following is a synopsis of the government structure.

1. At the head of the government is the directly-elected tripartite Presidency, which is in charge of foreign, diplomatic, and military affairs, and the budget of state-level institutions. The three presidency members are from the three constituent nations: one Bosniak, one Serb, and one Croat. Quite controversially, the candidates are self-defined as such and must only claim one identity. This means that a candidate cannot run as both a Bosniak and Croat, and a citizen cannot vote for both the Bosniak and Croat candidates. In addition, citizens who identify as an outside group, for example, Bosnian, Roma, or Jewish, are ineligible. Each member of the presidency is separately elected by plurality vote.

2. The Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina encompasses the House of Representatives and the House of Peoples. The 42 members of the House of Representatives are directly elected via a system of proportional representation. Twenty-eight members are elected in the Federation, 14 in the Republika Srpska. The 15 members of the House of Peoples are indirectly elected by the entities’ parliaments, with two-thirds of members from the Federation (five Croats and five Bosniaks) and one-third from the Republika Srpska (five Serbs).

3. The Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina is nominated by the Presidency and approved by the House of Representatives. The Chairman effectively serves as prime minister, and nominates ministers. The state government is in charge of security and defense, customs and immigration, fiscal and monetary policy, and facilitating inter-entity coordination and regulation.

4. At an entity level, both the Federation and the Republika Srpska have significant autonomy. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has a directly-elected 98-member house of representatives. The Republika Srpska has an 83-member national assembly. Entities’ parliaments have jurisdiction over healthcare, education, agriculture, culture,
veteran issues, labor, police, and internal affairs.

5. At both state and entity levels, delegates to the upper houses have the primary duty of ensuring that there is agreement between constituent nations and representatives of minorities when confirming legislation.

6. Both entities have a prime minister and 16 ministries. The Federation is furthermore divided into 10 cantons, each with its own administrative government and relative autonomy on local issues such as education and health care.

Within this government system, citizens of different ethnic groups and entities have different voting responsibilities. Members of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s parliament are elected through open lists and via proportional representation. At a state level, Bosnia and Herzegovina is divided into eight electoral units, three in the Republika Srpska and five in the Federation. Each presidency member is separately elected by plurality vote with each voter in the Federation choosing either a Bosniak or Croat candidate, and each voter in the Republika Srpska choosing a Serb candidate.

The Stabilization and Association Agreement between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the EU entered into force in June 2015. Bosnia and Herzegovina submitted its application to join the EU in February 2016.

In January 2009, Defense Minister Selmo Cikotić confirmed Bosnia and Herzegovina’s interest in seeking a Membership Action Plan, with membership achieved by 2012 at the latest. At the 2009 NATO Summit in Strasbourg-Kehl, Member States denied Bosnia and Herzegovina the opportunity to begin a Membership Action Plan, due to the non-implementation of necessary reforms. In 2010, NATO foreign ministers agreed to launch the Plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina, but with clear conditions, including the registration of all military equipment as possessions of the central state government and the registration of 63 prospective defense properties from the local level to the central government.

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As a result of the 2014 elections, there are three main coalitions in government: the Party of Democratic Action, The Alliance for Change (a post-election coalition composed of the Social Democratic Party and several smaller parties), and the Croatian Democratic Union. During the coalition-forming negotiations, activation of the Membership Action Plan figured prominently on the agenda. In fact, one of the conditions for the formation of various coalitions was all members’ recognition of conditions for activating the Membership Action Plan. At the time, the coalition of parties from the Republika Srpska agreed to support the registration of the prospective defense properties, which was the remaining condition for the activation of the Membership Action Plan and the approval of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s first Annual National Plan.

However, following the formation of the government, the issue of defense property registration continued as the Republika Srpska changed positions and refused to register the 23 properties located in its territory. To date, the entity has still not complied, despite the ruling of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which ordered Republika Srpska to register the properties in question. Furthermore, federal authorities also obstruct the registration process, and as a result, out of the 63 total properties, only 27 are registered, all in the territory of the Federation.

The current politics of the Republika Srpska, and in particular, its president Miloard Dodik, is relativizing the efforts made towards Bosnia and Herzegovina’s NATO accession.

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Dodik’s regime is strongly supported by Russian officials, as is clear in statements by the Russian Ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Petar Ivancov. Ambassador Ivancov accused High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina Valentin Inzko of distorting facts. The Russian ambassador clearly disagrees with the verdict of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but does not dare to publicly declare it, as the call for non-compliance with the decisions of the Constitutional Court would be equal to the call for the destruction of the constitutional order.

There is little consensus in Bosnia and Herzegovina on most issues, including its foreign policy goals. In addition, Bosnia and Herzegovina remains without a law on foreign policy.

Basic Facts about Bosnia and Herzegovina and NATO

*Note: For the purpose of this report, CEAS commissioned local experts to contribute their perspectives. The following sections were written by Dr. Emir Suljagić, a member of the CEAS advisory board, president of Political Council of Civic Alliance Party, director of the Emerging Democracies Center, former head of the Cabinet of the Mayor of Sarajevo, former minister of Education and Science of the Sarajevo Canton, and former deputy minister of Defense for Policy and Planning in the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Previous documents regarding the accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina to NATO have been based on the understanding that there is a general consensus concerning Bosnia and Herzegovina’s future NATO membership among local political parties and at all levels of government. Indeed, a number of documents adopted by the Presidency, Parliamen-
However, in reality, the Bosnian political class is deeply divided on this issue. The division about NATO membership runs along ethnic cleavages, but is no less a result of deliberate effort on the part of some states, including some states in the Region, to ensure that Bosnia and Herzegovina does not make irreversible steps towards NATO membership and/or realign its defense, security, and foreign policy with NATO. The fact that this is happening in contravention of the existing legal and institutional framework does not change the reality. However, as a result of that, Bosnia and Herzegovina’s integration process into NATO has been obstructed at best and is at a dead-end at worst.

### Legislative Framework

Bosnia and Herzegovina defined accession to Euro-Atlantic integrations as one of its foreign policy priorities. Accession to NATO’s Partnership for Peace program was a test of determination in achieving interoperability with NATO member countries. Presently, Bosnia and Herzegovina maintains a significant level of cooperation with NATO and NATO member countries through the existing frameworks of the Planning and Review Process, Individual Partnership Program, and Individual Partnership Action Plan, while formally continuing to pursue intensified dialogue.

Previous defense reform has fulfilled its goals by all accounts. A unified system of defense has been established as a result, financed and controlled by the state, as well as a unified armed force functioning in compliance with the unified set of standards, procedures, regulations, and laws. On the other hand, many issues are still left outstanding, which have been set forth in laws and decisions by relevant state authorities regarding reserve force, fixed-wing aviation, budgeting, and completion of some of the strategic documents, such as military doctrine, military strategy, and defense review.

The security sector reform resulted in significant improvements in terms of internal security, primarily intelligence service, border security and investigative capacity. However, security sector reform resulted in the establishment of new police bodies and administrative entities, which the majority of citizens do not prioritize or see as contributing to their individual security. In short, there is no single, unified police structure in place with clearly delineated competencies.

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156 Bosnia and Herzegovina, Communication Strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina in NATO integration process, January 2009.

157 Defense Review was apparently agreed upon amid some controversy, but it has not been released or published as of yet.
Information Landscape

There is a general lack of public information about NATO. Results of three different and unrelated public opinion polls in a period of several years show a uniform lack of information and a stable cleavage along ethnic/entity lines.

More than one third of those interviewed in one of those polls\(^{158}\) responded that they saw NATO primarily as either a “foreign army,” “European army,” or “international force.” There appears to be a deep-rooted lack of understanding of what NATO actually is, regardless of ethnicity or entity.

Additionally, 63% of the population believed that NATO membership is a precondition for eventual EU membership. However, 71% of the respondents felt either insufficiently informed or not informed at all about, “the process of Bosnia and Herzegovina approaching full membership of NATO.” It is noteworthy that the group which felt best informed was also the most NATO-skeptic. Although 71% of all respondents viewed NATO in a positive light, the figure was only 30% in the Republika Srpska as opposed to 89% in the Federation. The overall support for Bosnia and Herzegovina’s accession to NATO was at 74%, but this is in stark contrast to a 66% opposition in the Republika Srpska.

Another public opinion poll shows similar values. In this study, about three quarters of respondents supported Bosnia and Herzegovina’s bid for NATO membership, whereas some 27% did not support it. This research also shows the degree of opposition in Republika Srpska at 66%\(^{159}\).

Finally, a poll in the Federation, Republika Srpska, and Brčko Distrikt shows that there is a stable cleavage around the issue of membership of Bosnia and Herzegovina in NATO. Whereas there was a slight increase in the support for membership, the distribution remained quite similar: 65.1% for Bosnia and Herzegovina, 82.3% for the Federation, 37.2% for Republika Srpska, and 67.1% for Brčko Distrikt. This opinion poll indicates, however, an increase in support for NATO membership in Republika Srpska from 30.2% in 2009 to 37.6% in May 2012\(^{160}\).

As indicated above, the results from three different polls over a number of years and for different purposes reinforce each other both in terms of the result and difference in support across ethnic and entity lines. Therefore it is safe to conclude the following:

- There is a general lack of information, knowledge, and understanding of NATO and NATO integration processes,

\(^{158}\)Bosnia and Herzegovina, Communication Strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina in NATO integration process, January 2009.

\(^{159}\)Costs and benefits of BH joining to the NATO Alliance. Published by Center for Security Studies. August 2009.

\(^{160}\)Widening of NATO to Bosnia and Herzegovina (Step towards Stability or Do Not Count Na To). October 2012.
There are differing and contradictory views of the Alliance between entities, which would indicate a difference in approach in Republika Srpska compared to the Federation, and

A substantial effort over a prolonged period is required to remedy the public perception of NATO and Bosnia and Herzegovina’s bid for full membership in the Alliance.

The public opinion research shows also that in addition to not having sufficient information to come to an informed opinion, there seems to be no dialogue about NATO and Bosnia and Herzegovina’s membership. In fact, whatever debate there is, it is centered on a number of few emotional and highly ideological lines of argument.

There is hardly any effort on the part of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina to communicate meaningfully with the country’s public about the bid for NATO membership, its importance, its benefits, and the costs of staying out of the Alliance.

As an illustration, there is not a single budget line in the budget of state of Bosnia and Herzegovina to be spent towards public diplomacy, communication, or promotion of NATO membership. In fact, there is no institutional framework to pursue that sort of approach even if the political will to do it were in place.

The existing Commission for NATO Integration Process is neither equipped nor legally authorized to coordinate or lead in any other way Bosnia and Herzegovina’s NATO integration process. Its mandate is unclear, competencies non-existent and in all likelihood it was established rather to relegate the issue of NATO integration to the background.

Therefore, the first step for the Council of Ministers is to establish a separate body, along the lines of the EU Integration Directorate, a NATO Integration Coordination Office as a permanent, independent, and expert body of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the mission of coordinating the activities of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s authorities and monitoring the implementation of decisions by other relevant institutions concerning the fulfillment of the requirements within the NATO integration process.

The office would serve to coordinate the NATO integration process at the state level and between state institutions and entities. As part of that, it should fall within its mandate to also coordinate efforts at promoting and informing the public about the integration process, presenting facts and appropriate narratives, and raising awareness of the importance of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s full membership for the country. Establishing an agency of this type would show that there is a consensus about the aspirations of Bosnia and Herzegovina towards NATO membership as is set out in a number of its legal documents and for-
eign policy declarations. In other words, that membership is a shared goal of the political elites. It would signify that there is indeed a lasting consensus within the political class of Bosnia and Herzegovina about the necessity of joining NATO.

A coordinated effort in other countries where public opinion on NATO has been similarly divided such as Montenegro resulted in an increased degree of coordination between different state institutions and agencies, but also better communication with citizens about steps the country took towards NATO membership.

On the other hand, none of the three ministries of Bosnia and Herzegovina who should carry the burden of NATO integration, those being the ministries of defense, security, and foreign affairs, have more than skeleton public information and relations offices, which are incapable of communicating the primary task and missions of the ministries. More to the point, communication with the public in terms of NATO integration is not proportionate to the ministries’ roles, nor is it coordinated.

A Serious Breach of Order: Establishing Ethnic Lines of Command in Republika Srpska

On January 9, 2017, on the occasion marking the Day of Republika Srpska, which had been declared illegal by the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, there was a violation of the chain of command.

Specifically, the Serbian member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mladen Ivanić, made an order to the members of the Armed Forces of Serbian nationality, despite the fact that there was no decision by the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to the law on defense, this is the only institution which can issue commands regarding the movement of the military body. However, Ivanić positioned them on the main square in Banja Luka, where the ceremony was held.\textsuperscript{161}

The soldiers were members of the Third Battalion, the 6th Infantry Brigade, from the “Kozara” barracks. Ivanić continues to insist that he requested and received military honors and that the decision was made by the Ministry of Defense of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which does not correspond to the factual situation: the soldiers in question were not

in solemn, but in working uniforms, and were not members of the special solemn units, rather, they were members of the Third Battalion of the 6th Infantry Brigade.

After the incident, contradictory statements continued to come from the Ministry of Defense. The same day that the Ministry declared that procedures were not violated, a second announcement indicated that there was disagreement within the institution.

However, even after an internal investigation, no measures were taken against the officers and soldiers who acted upon the illegal command, which involved the Commander of the Operational Command, General Major Dragan Vuković, and the 6th Infantry Brigade Commander, Brigadier General Radovan Ilić. In other words, the repetition of this or a similar incident is quite possible. Worse, this incident shows that ethnic command lines are in place and, in the right circumstances, prevail over formal and legal lines of command and hierarchy.

**Attempted Weaponization of Croats and Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Role of Croatia and Russia**

The politicization of ethnicity is, in nearly all countries in the Western Balkans, embedded in the foundational structures and constitutive documents. Bosnia and Herzegovina is no exception. The current Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, or Annex 4 of the Dayton Peace Agreement,\(^\text{162}\) has many long-term deficiencies, despite its success at halting the Bosnian War. The most critical of these is the evident politicization of ethnicity, which emerged as discriminative political participation through the case Sejdić and Finci v. Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although much has been written about discrimination resulting from the Dayton Peace Agreement, this case best illustrates the issue of discriminative political participation being instrumentalized and weaponized by political actors.

Sejdić and Finci v. Bosnia and Herzegovina was conducted from 2006 to 2009 before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, following a complaint by Derva

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Sejdić and Jakob Finci against Bosnia and Herzegovina. As members of national minorities, Sejdić and Finci were prevented from being elected to the Presidency or the House of Peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Constitution and electoral law state that only members of the Constituent Peoples, including ethnic Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks, are eligible to stand for election for these offices. Sejdić and Finci filed complaints, pursuant to the provisions of Article IV and V of the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The court ruled in their favor, determining that Bosnia and Herzegovina’s constitution is in breach of the European Convention on Human Rights. However, the court’s decision has not been fully enforced throughout the country.

The politicization of ethnicity and discrimination in political participation in particular are an issue for all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina who do not want to declare themselves as members of an ethnic group and especially as members of one of the constitutive ethnic groups. The politicization of ethnicity alone is illiberal and, additionally, in a different geopolitical circumstance, could be instrumentalized and weaponized. It spreads ethnic stereotypes and encourages hatred among different ethnicities, which is a direct threat to democratization, stabilization, and the Euro-Atlantic integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The complicated arrangement of Bosnian and Herzegovina is also reflected through additional setbacks like increased Russian influence and the unacceptable behavior of the Croatian government and its involvement in Bosnian internal affairs, which spans from rewriting history to promoting of extreme-right values and groups.

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165 Ibid.
As highlighted by one of contributors of this study, Emir Suljagić, Zagreb’s intelligence and diplomatic pressure on Sarajevo is systematic, centralized, and has a clear goal. Croatian officials also spread false narratives regarding thousands of extreme and radicalized Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina, claiming that they are security threats to the entire Region. Unfortunately these fallacies occasionally drag the attention to once reputable Western periodicals and media. As Croatian President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović said, “ten thousand people with very radical rhetoric and intentions are presenting the biggest security threat for Croatia.”

In September 2017, the daily newspaper Jutarnji List justified her contemporary visit to Russia, stating, “the assessment is that Republika Srpska could try to call a referendum on independence in five years, which would certainly complicate relations in this part of the world. How much support from Moscow would have Banja Luka if this scenario occurs is difficult to evaluate, but it is very important that Croatia keep in touch with the representatives of the Russian Federation and when it comes to events in the Republika Srpska but also throughout the Region of the Southeast, primarily around Bosnia and Herzegovina.”

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a target of Russia’s Balkan gambit, which possibly the most forceful one yet. Jasmin Mujanović, political analyst from Bosnia and Herzegovina, explained that the Russian plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina will be shaped by two major factors. The first is the Kremlin’s long-standing relationship with Milorad Dodik, the secessionist president of Republika Srpska. The second, more alarming factor is the emerging link between Moscow and Dragan Čović, the Croat member of the country’s three-person presidency and head of the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina, an offshoot of the Croatian Democratic Union, the current governing party in Zagreb. Russia’s objective is simple: keep Bosnia and Herzegovina out of NATO and the EU. Russia is prepared to do anything to achieve these aspirations and ensure that Bosnia and Herzegovina remains an ethnically fragmented basket case in the heart of the Balkans.

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Croatian secessionist tendencies in Bosnia have also presented a challenge, in particular due to Dodik’s absolute control in Republika Srpska, which serves as a template for Čović’s own quest to establish a “third entity:” an ostensibly mono-ethnic, Croat-dominated province in Herzegovina.\textsuperscript{171} This is the context in which Russia has emerged as an ardent advocate of what the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina refers to as “Croat self-determination,” that is, Croat nationalist politics in Bosnia.\textsuperscript{172}


\textsuperscript{170} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{171} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{172} Ibid.
12. Macedonia: Key Obstacles to the Stabilization and Democratization

General Information and Short Background

The Republic of Macedonia, hereafter referred to as Macedonia, occupies 25,713 square kilometers. According to 2016 population estimates, the Macedonia has 2,072,490 inhabitants, and a population density of 80.6 inhabitants per 2,172 square kilometers.\(^{173}\)

Macedonia is one of the successor states of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It declared independence following a referendum on September 8, 1991, in which 95% of the population voted to leave the already-dissolving Federation. Voter turnout was only 72%, as the Albanian population boycotted the referendum due to a disagreement regarding their status in the constitution. Macedonia became a member of the United Nations in 1993, but, as a result of an ongoing dispute with Greece over the use of its name, was admitted under the provisional description, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.” It is sometimes abbreviated as FYROM or FYR Macedonia, a term that is also used by international organizations such as the EU, the Council of Europe, and NATO.

Long lasting disputes over the participations of ethnic Albanians, the biggest minority group, in public and political life in Macedonia broke into an armed conflict between Albanian insurgents and Macedonian security forces in 2001. The conflict formally ended with the Ohrid Framework Agreement,\(^{175}\) which was signed on August 13, 2001.

According to the latest census, which was held in 2002, 64% of the country’s population is Macedonian and 25% Albanian. Roma, Turks, Serbs and other minorities constitute the rest.\(^{176}\)

The Stabilization and Association Agreement between Macedonia and the EU entered into force in April 2004, and its status as a candidate country was granted in December 2005. Accession negotiations were opened in 2009.


In 2011, there was an attempt to hold a new census, however the initiative was discarded following ethnic disputes. Albanian parties and nongovernmental organization claimed that the Macedonian majority on the census commission had arranged the criteria in order to falsely underestimate the number of Albanians in the country. One of the critical issues was whether the headcount should include people who had been absent from the country for over one year. Albanians, who have left the country to work abroad in disproportionately large numbers, wanted them included. However, the rules of the EU statistics arm, Eurostat, advised against it, and Macedonia’s main ruling party, VMRO-DPMNE, also did not budge. The government of Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski then annulled the census after the commission tendered its collective resignation.177

In May 2015 an incident occurred around the Macedonian town of Kumanovo, when an armed 44-person group passed through the Macedonia-Kosovo border and occupied a compound in a Kumanovo suburb. After two days of fighting, eight police officers and 14 group members were killed. Thirty surrendered and are now on trial.

Prosecutors in Macedonia charged the group with terrorism-related offences, while some were charged with illegally possessing arms and explosives. The Ministry of Interior said they were members of the now-dismantled Kosovo Liberation Army. According to the Macedonian Information Agency, 18 of those being held are Kosovo nationals; 11 are Macedonian citizens, two of whom are living in Kosovo; and one is an Albanian national who had been living in Germany.

This episode violence followed an incident one month prior in which approximately 40 ethnic Albanians from Kosovo briefly took over a border police station near the Macedonian village of Gosince, demanding the creation of an Albanian state within Macedonia. Albanians in Macedonia, as well as the country’s opposition parties at the time, suspected that the two-day shootout was a setup, staged to divert public attention from the country’s growing political turmoil after the opposition leader, Zoran Zaev, started publishing details of incriminating wiretapped conversations between the high-ranking VMRO-DPMNE state officials under the leadership of former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski.

Namely, the Macedonian national security service, acting on orders from Macedonia’s conservative and increasingly authoritarian government, was behind the wiretapping scandal. According to a document prepared by independent experts hired by the EU, the government178 under Prime Minister Gruevski misused national security services, “to control top officials in the public administration, prosecutors, judges, and political opponents.” The report also noted the, “apparent direct involvement of senior government and party officials in electoral fraud, corruption, abuse of power and authority, conflict

177 Ibid.
Russia characterized the protests as illegal, hostile activates perpetrated by the politically Western state and non-state actors, including United States’ Central Intelligence Agency and George Soros. “Macedonian opposition has again become a tool for instigating, including with external support, an internal political conflict to disrupt an early election,” a Russian foreign ministry statement said, referencing the situation in April 2016. By then, a new wave of rallies had begun amid President Gjorge Ivanov’s decision to pardon a large number of officials and businessmen close to the ruling party, who were under investigation for the wiretapping affair. The presidential pardon was heavily condemned by Western representatives.

Protests demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Gruevski were described by the ruling VMRO-DPMNE party as non-patriotic and financed by foreigners, whose interests differ from those of native Macedonians. Western ambassadors in the country were directly attacked as, “involving themselves too much in the internal affairs of Macedonia” by Prime Minister Gruevski, and separate attacks were reserved for the critical media and the nongovernmental sector because of the funding they receive from Western national and multilateral development agencies. A special line of attack was executed against the local Soros Foundation and the organizations it funds, as well as George Soros himself. VMRO-DPMNE propaganda designated such groups as “traitors,” and “mercenaries.”

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Macedonia: Key Obstacles to the Stabilization and Democratization

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At the same time, the ruling majority supported counter-protests, which contained anti-Western undertones and spread disinformation about the imminent, “federalization and cantonization” threatening Macedonia. The ruling party deemed these rallies authentic, in contrast to concurrent popular movements.

After the former defense minister and member of the ethnic Albanian party, the Democratic Union for Integration, Talat Xhaferi, was elected as speaker of the parliament in April 2017, hundreds of VMRO-DPMNE supporters, some wearing masks, stormed the parliament. Some of them physically attacked members of parliament, including the opposition leader, Zoran Zaev. Later it was discovered that these protesters were let inside the building by a group of VMRO-DPMNE members of parliament. In addition, a member of the Serbian diplomatic mission in Macedonia and official communication officer in the Serbian intelligence service, Goran Zivaljevic, also illegally entered the parliament along with the protesters.

The crisis was set on the path towards resolution when President Ivanov gave Zoran Zaev the mandate to form a new government.

On May 31, 2017, a new government was elected, with the former opposition leader Zoran Zaev as Prime Minister, with the votes of 49 members of parliament, out of 120 total. Prime Minister Zaev formed a coalition with the largest ethnic Albanian party, the Democratic Union for Integration in February 2017, but also received votes from the second largest Albanian party, BESA, even though the party did not enter the coalition, but vowed to support it. VMRO-DPMNE became the opposition, despite having the most members of parliament. After losing the support of the Democratic Union for Integration,

\(^{182}\) Ibid.

VMRO-DPMNE did not have enough votes to form a new government.

The new government announced a renewed focus on Euro-Atlantic integration and a willingness to compromise regarding the name dispute and other internal, bilateral, and multilateral issues that were neglected during the VMRO-DPMNE rule.

The Serbian edition of Sputnik has described these compromises, as well as the agreements that led to the formation of the government, as the result of blatant pressure by pan-Albanian forces in the Region. It has portrayed these developments as threats to Macedonian independence and the state’s existence, with Prime Minister Zaev depicted as an enemy of the state.

In late August 2017, a diplomatic crisis erupted between Serbia and Macedonia following the revelation that a Serbian diplomat/spy was present in parliament during the violence and unrest. The conflict was formally and allegedly resolved within a week, without clear explanations for why it broke at the first place. The circumstances indicate a poor state of affairs regarding the democratic control over intelligence agencies in both countries. This individual crisis as well as the broader context should be more thoroughly investigated.

**Analysis of the Ohrid Framework Agreement**

The Ohrid Framework Agreement of 2001, as it is officially known, does not read like a classic peace accord. While the cessation of hostilities, disarmament of the Albanian rebels and general amnesty were among its key provisions, most of the agreement concerned increased rights for the Albanian minority – rights that would require substantial changes in key state institutions.

For many among the majority of the Macedonian population, the agreement represented a border that was no longer possible to make concessions, while many in the Albanian community felt that the agreement was a confirmation of their struggle for greater rights and equality in society, and therefore a necessary step forward. The Agreement changed the appearance of Macedonia, legally transforming it into a multiethnic state, ruled by the elements of the division of power. It also made an impact on the reality of the citizens. Most state institutions largely reflect this multiethnic reality, and the monopoly of

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**The constitution and legislation attempt to define citizenship as an individual and ethnic identity, which is reinforced through elements such as the Badinter majority, which means that, with the parliamentary majority, the adoption of laws concerning ethnic communities need a majority among the members of the ethnic communities themselves. Although this is a practical solution for everyday matters, it does not solve the existing paradox in the long run.**

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184 Web page of Sputnik. Available at: [https://rs.sputniknews.com/](https://rs.sputniknews.com/).
one language has disappeared. However, many issues related to the implementation of the Agreement remain open.

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The multiethnic state as defined by the constitution exists only declaratively as protocol requires. Political and intellectual elites, which are generally one and the same, have not invested in efforts in the create a recognizable Macedonian national identity that goes beyond the narrow framework of ethnic definitions and myths that accompany them.

The process of creating a recognizable Macedonian identity is, in fact, occurring, as is visible in the enormous financial resources and political capital invested in promoting the process. The political and intellectual elite behind it must include Albanians, who defined themselves as part of the cultural nation, in this developing collective identity. At present, Macedonian patriotism offers little to the Albanians or other minorities.

Unresolved disputes with Greece regarding Macedonia’s name, Bulgaria regarding the Macedonian language, and Serbia regarding the recognition of an independent church also demonstrate that identity issues remain present challenges.

\section*{Security System Structures}

Macedonia’s security sector is regulated by the constitution and laws for its implementation. The security sector consists of the parliament, president, government, security council, armed forces, police, Protection and Rescue Directorate, and Administration for Security and Counterintelligence.\textsuperscript{186}


\textsuperscript{186} Talevski, Igor. Intelligence Reform in Macedonia. DCAF. Available at: \url{http://www.dcaf.ch/Event-Attachement/Intelligence-Reform-In-Macedonia-Igor-Talevski}. 
Democratic Oversight of the Security System

In 1991, Macedonia became independent and commenced security sector reform with the support of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the EU, and NATO. The reform intensified after the internal armed conflict of 2001 spurred demands for greater rights and autonomy of the Albanian minority, which accounts for roughly a quarter of the population. A special chapter in the country’s constitution covers issues related to the state of war and emergency. Also, in line with the constitution, the armed forces protect the country’s territorial integrity and independence, and any military or paramilitary associations that are not part of the national armed forces are prohibited. There are four parliamentary committees in charge of the security sector: The Committee on Defence and Security, The Standing Inquiry Committee, The Committee for Supervising the Work of the Security and Counterintelligence Directorate and the Intelligence Agency for the Protection of Civil Freedoms and Rights, and The Committee on Oversight of the Implementation of the Special Investigation Measure for Interception of Communication.187

The European Commission’s 2016 report on Macedonia stressed that the deep domestic crisis has further undermined the parliament’s legislative and oversight functions. In the Przino agreement,188 reached in June 2015 with help from the EU, the main parties agreed to, among other things, constitute a committee of inquiry into the wiretapping scandal which had brought the political crisis to a peak in early 2015.189 The Intelligence Oversight Committee and the Interception of Communications Committee, both chaired by the opposition, were expected to start work and investigate democratic oversight failings in the functioning of the state intelligence services. These two committees did not carry out their mandate, while the inquiry committee, due to its boycott of hearings and refusal to answer questions from members of the main ruling party, was not able to take action on the political accountability regarding the illegal wiretaps. All three committees failed to submit the initial reports envisaged in the Przino deal. Shortcomings in the inspection of the state intelligence services and the work of the relevant committees were presented in the Priebe report and the European Commission made recommendations on oversight and reform of the intelligence services in its subsequent urgent reform priorities.190

187 For more see: http://www.sobranie.mk/working-bodies-2016-2020-en.nspx
188 The Przino agreement or agreement from 2 June – 15 July 2015 is a political agreement between the main political parties in the Macedonia with the mediation of the EU. The agreement ended the Macedonian political and institutional crisis in the first half of 2015. Full agreement is available at: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/news_corner/news/news-files/20150619_agreement.pdf
Basic Facts About Macedonia and NATO

*Note: For the purpose of this report, CEAS commissioned local experts to contribute their perspectives. The following sections were written by Dane Teleski, an expert in post-conflict democratization, transformation of rebel groups, political parties, ethnic politics, regional cooperation, EU integration, and Southeastern Europe. In 2014, he received a Civil Society Scholar Award from the Open Society Institute in New York. He was a Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Southeast European Studies at the University of Graz (October 2015 – June 2016), and a Fellow at the Centre for Advanced Studies of South East Europe at the University of Rijeka (March – July, 2016). He was a Visiting Lecturer at the University of Fribourg in fall 2016.

In 1993, the Assembly of Republic of Macedonia unanimously adopted a Resolution for NATO Membership. Macedonia joined the Partnership for Peace in 1995 and was admitted to the North-Atlantic Cooperation Council, a predecessor to the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. The NATO Liaison office in Skopje was opened in 1996, and the next year Macedonia established its Permanent Mission to NATO. In 1999, at the NATO Summit in Washington, Macedonia was given the status of a NATO candidate country and started preparation for the Membership Action Plan. The same year, Macedonia assisted the NATO intervention in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

However, following the Kosovo crisis, there was a conflict spill-over fueled by internal ethnic grievances in 2001. After the peaceful conflict resolution, NATO was deployed in Macedonia between 2001 and 2003. In 2002, despite importing security, Macedonia started to participate in international peace-keeping missions. In addition, NATO created a Headquarters in Skopje to advice on military aspects of security sector reform. In 2003, Macedonia signed the US-Adriatic Charter, along with Albania and Croatia. The country was set to join NATO at the Bucharest Summit in 2008.

However, Greece vetoed the decision due to the unresolved and long-standing name dispute. Even though the International Court of Justice ruled, in 2011, that the Greek decision breached the Interim Accord that Greece and Macedonia signed to normalize relations in 1995, and that allows for Macedonia to join any international organization where Greece is a member using the provisional reference “former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,” NATO remained on the position that finding a mutually acceptable solution with Greece is needed before Macedonia can be invited to join. The relations between NATO and Macedonia have been on standstill since. NATO membership is pending on solving the name dispute. In absence of that, in 2016 and 2017, Macedonia will be making its 17th cycle of the Membership Action Plan.

Cooperation and Participation in Peacekeeping Missions

Macedonia supported the NATO intervention in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999 and received aid from NATO for dealing with over 300,000 refugees that mainly came from Kosovo. During the conflict in 2001, then-Secretary General of NATO Lord George Robertson played a key role in conflict prevention, along with EU counterparts. After the conflict resolution, NATO deployed three short-term consecutive missions in Macedonia: Operation Essential Harvest (August 22, 2001 to September 26, 2001), Operation Amber Fox (September 27, 2001 to December 15, 2002), and Operation Allied Harmony (December 16, 2002 to March 31, 2003). The aim of the first mission was to collect weapons from Albanian armed groups, the second aimed to ensure protection of international monitors overseeing the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, and the third continued with that mandate and assisted government to take ownership of security throughout the country.

Whilst importing security, at the same time, Macedonia started to participate in international peace-keeping operations. The country has given a fair contribution to international peace-keeping operations, at some points nearly 3% of the overall staff of the ground forces of the Army were deployed. The Army was deployed in several international operations: ISAF in Afghanistan (2002-2014), ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2006-2008), UNIFIL (2007-present), “Freedom for Iraq” (2003-2008) and “Resolute Support” (2015-present) in Afghanistan.

By far the biggest contribution was made to ISAF. From 2002 to 2014, over 2,700 Macedonian peacekeepers were deployed in ISAF. This was among the highest per capita contribution to the mission. The participation in ISAF increased over time and gradually changed its profile. Beginning in 2002 with two staff officers, it grew to include one military unit in 2003. Between 2004 and 2006 the participation included a platoon, and more significant contribution was made in 2006, when 90 soldiers were sent in one rotation as

A second challenge was a security incident in Kumanovo in May 2015. Armed Albanian combatants, mainly coming from Kosovo engaged in a weekend war with police security forces. The short interethnic violence left 18 dead and 30 arrested, facing terrorism charges. The trial is ongoing and the motives of the group remain unclear. The security incident was the peak of instability during the political crisis that began in January 2015.


194 For more information see Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
part of the United Kingdom contingent. Furthermore, Macedonia took part in one SEEBRIG rotation with 10 staff officers in 2006.

Macedonia’s contribution signaled high-level cooperation with NATO and the country was acknowledged as reliable partner. In 2007, Macedonia deployed one infantry regiment in ISAF. In addition, Macedonia took part in a joined medical team in A3 format, involving Macedonia, Albanian, and Croatia. From August 2005 to July 2009, eight rotations were made serving in the hospital at Kabul airport. Also, a joint medical surgery team served in the framework of the Norwegian provincial reconstruction team. From 2010, peacekeepers from Macedonia provided support for capacity building of the Afghanistan’s army and military police. During ISAF, Macedonian peacekeepers and the Army gained legitimacy and confirmation for being secure, reliable and well trained partners to NATO and other contributing countries.

Last, but not least, within NATO, Macedonia held the chairmanship of the Southeast Europe Security Cooperation Steering Group several times. The country provides full logistical support to KFOR forces in Kosovo through the Host Nation Support Coordination Centre in Skopje.

**Key Security Issues**

Strategic documents for national security of Macedonia define threats to security as terrorism, transnational organized crime and corruption, regional conflicts and crisis, radical nationalism and extremism, inciting ethnic and religious hatred, weapon stockpiles, illegal acts of foreign secret services, cybercrime, epidemic diseases, degradation and destruction of environment, and internal socioeconomic problems. However, recently, the country has faced more specific challenges.

One was the migrant and refugee crisis of 2015. According to data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, over 750,000 persons transited Macedonia in 2015. This was overwhelming for the capacities and population of the small country. At the beginning, the government chose a repressive approach, which led to clashes between migrants and police at border crossings. An emergency situation was declared in June 2015 and the army was deployed to protect the border, with positive results. However, there could be an expectation-capabilities gap for the army, should the Balkan route open again, prompting a new wave of migrants and refugees.
A second challenge was a security incident in Kumanovo in May 2015. Armed Albanian combatants, mainly coming from Kosovo engaged in a weekend war with police security forces. The short interethnic violence left 18 dead and 30 arrested, facing terrorism charges. The trial is ongoing and the motives of the group remain unclear. The security incident was the peak of instability during the political crisis that began in January 2015.

The political crisis is the third and greatest challenge for Macedonia. In January 2015, the opposition released wiretapped materials that showed a gross abuse of power and widespread corruption among high-level government officials. The materials provided evidence to a worrisome trend of democratic backsliding and massive rule of law failures. Political polarization significantly increased and waves of protests were threatening to destabilize the country. The EU intervened to broker a political agreement that led to early parliamentary elections in December 2016. However, an ousted authoritarian and corrupt government impeded the peaceful transfer of power in the first quarter of 2017. Political polarization is again very high and interethnic relations are strained.

Strategic documents define integration into NATO and the EU as vital to the interests of Macedonia. Support for joining NATO remains high; however, it is diminishing over time. At 93% in 2008, it decreased to 71% in 2016.195 In strategic documents, Macedonia sees NATO and the EU’s open door policies as key factors for regional stability. However, the actions of the past government have not been consistent with the declared national interests and goals. It is unclear whether the country sufficiently meets the political criteria to join NATO. The military-defense aspect is most likely adequate to meet NATO standards. The main problem is lack of funding. The army has faced permanent budget cuts for the past several years. More spending was given to the police for equipment, technical upgrades, and new hires. During the political crisis, the authoritarian government repressively used the police and likely the security sector as well, including the advanced surveillance system.

**Macedonian Relations with Russia**

In June 2017, the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project and partners NOVA TV and the Crime and Corruption Reporting Network came into possession of leaked Macedonian intelligence documents stating that Russian spies and diplomats were involved in a nearly decade-long effort to spread propaganda and provoke discord in Mace-

Macedonia as part of a Region-wide endeavor to stop Balkan countries from joining NATO. These documents are a collection of reports by Macedonian counterintelligence that describe efforts by Serbian intelligence to support anti-Western and pro-Russian nationalists in Macedonia. The main findings demonstrated Russian operations in Macedonia and noted that, “it is evaluated that in the past nine years, the Republic of Macedonia has been undergoing strong subversive propaganda and intelligence activity implemented through the Embassy of the Russian Federation.”

According to a briefing prepared in early 2017 for Vladimir Atanasovski, director of Macedonia’s administration for security and counter-intelligence, strong subversive propaganda and intelligence activity were directed from the Russian Embassy. That influence operation began in 2008, when Greece blocked Macedonia’s attempt to join NATO as a result of the name dispute.

Documents show that Russia used soft power as a part of its plan to isolate the country from the influence of the West. The Kremlin’s aim was to control strategic energy resources through partnership with the Balkan countries, making Macedonia exclusively dependent.

The report also notes that three agents from Russia’s foreign intelligence service were based in Skopje, and overseen by the intelligence service’s partner station in Belgrade. The Russian Embassy in Macedonia was also home to four spies from Russia’s military intelligence agency, with their activities coordinated from the its base in Sofia. Journalists for Russia’s state news agency TASS and representatives of Rossotrudnichestvo, a state cultural body, worked with Russian intelligence. It adds that Russian consulates in the towns of Bitola and Ohrid function as intelligence bases.

The documents say that Russian diplomats were, “extremely cautious” when meeting contacts; frequently “change locations at the last minute;” did not use mobile phones; and employed passwords and legends, including fake cover stories to mask real identities and purposes. Russian agents offered cash to the Macedonian media to spread, “information and disinformation,” the files allege.

Russian influence in Macedonia in form of cultural outreach also increased. This form of soft power focused on pan-Slavic identity and shared Orthodox Christian faith. The Russian Embassy has overseen the creation of roughly 30 Macedonian-Russian friendship associations. It has opened a Russian cultural center in Skopje and sponsored the

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198 Ibid.

199 Ibid.
construction of Orthodox crosses and Russian-style churches across the country, the documents say.

In recent years, Russian officials increased their criticism of Western influence as foreign interference in Macedonia. Kremlin has begun a campaign of intimidation and false narratives, claiming that the natality of the Albanian community in Macedonia is a serious security issue, and hyping the extremist pan-Albanian idea of Greater Albania.

In December 2016, a high official from the United Russia party, Sergey Zeleznyak, gave an interview for the portal Russian Word, stating that Russia will support the formation of an alliance of militarily neutral sovereign states in the Balkans, which would include Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**Attempted Weaponization of Serbs in Macedonia: The Role of Serbia and Russia**

Anti-democratic and anti-liberal consequences of embedded issues politicization of ethnicities, that can lead to their weaponization, can be detected in the case of sudden increase of visibility in the Serbian and Russian media of Ivan Stoilkovic, leader of Democratic Party of Serbs in Macedonia. Stoiljkovic was elected in 2001 after a rift inside the party and up until 2008 he was a coalition partner of SDSM. In 2008 he switched to partnering with VMRO-DPMNE and continued to be a member of parliament. The Democratic Party of Serbs in Macedonia and Stoiljkovic are considered as loyal to VMRO-DPMNE, even after VMRO-DPMNE lost the power in the 2016 elections. Stoiljkovic is also presented in Serbian pro-government and Russian media as a, “leader of Serbs in Macedonia.”

On June 29, 2016 Stoiljkovic, representing his party, signed a declaration in Moscow together with a representative of United Russia, Putin’s pocket party, envisioning a change in Macedonia’s constitution towards neutrality and disavowing Macedonia’s NATO membership efforts. VMRO-DPMNE, a coalition partner, claimed to be unaware of this activity. However, this episode is a prime example of VNRO-DPMNE’s “strategic ambiguity,” when increasing ties to Russia in an obvious, but indirect way.

Through May 2017, Stoiljkovic has given number of interviews for Macedonian and Serbian media stating that the situation in Macedonia can lead to Serbs becoming an endangered minority, similar to the Serbs in Kosovo. He led a protest against the adoption of

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the “Tirana Platform,” a joint statement of the ethnic Albanian political parties in Macedonia used by VMRO-DPMNE as a scapegoat to scare Macedonians with some unknown future dissolution of the country, which could only be thwarted by voting for VMRO-DPMNE. Stoilkovic presented “Tirana Platform” as a tool for creation of greater Albanian state that will deny Serbs in Macedonia of all rights and complete the destabilization of Balkans. On number of occasions, Stoilkovic noted that Serbs in Macedonia are deprived, isolated, and unprotected.

The other political party of Serbs in Macedonia is the Serbian Progressive Party in Macedonia, which is led by Vane Velickovic. He became the party leader in 2014 after ousting Dragisa Miletic, who led the Democratic Party of Serbs in Macedonia until 2001. This party was founded in 2006 and shares a variety of contacts with Serbian and nongovernmental organizations in Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Republika Srpska, and elsewhere and with the core party, Serbia-centered Serbian Progressive Party. Documents from the Serbian Progressive Party in Macedonia say that it has a conservative political orientation and that it was established under the primer of the Serbian progressives. The party also claims to develop ties with the Serbian progressives and the similarly-named party in Bosnia and Hercegovina. It also notes that it has in mind, “the constitutions and the laws regarding the work of the political parties in the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Macedonia, SNSM is legally

Through May 2017, Stoiljkovic has given number of interviews for Macedonian and Serbian media stating that the situation in Macedonia can lead to Serbs becoming an endangered minority, similar to the Serbs in Kosovo. He led a protest against the adoption of the “Tirana Platform,” a joint statement of the ethnic Albanian political parties in Macedonia used by VMRO-DPMNE as a scapegoat to scare Macedonians with some unknown future dissolution of the country, which could only be thwarted by voting for VMRO-DPMNE. Stoilkovic presented “Tirana Platform” as a tool for creation of greater Albanian state that will deny Serbs in Macedonia of all rights and complete the destabilization of Balkans. On number of occasions, Stoiljkovic noted that Serbs in Macedonia are deprived, isolated, and unprotected.

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205 Српска напредна странка во Македонија – СНСМ. Available at: https://www.facebook.com/srpskanaprednastrankavomakedonija/posts/222394004881715.
and in an organizational manner independent political organization separate from SNS in the Republic of Serbia.”

Until 2013 the party was in coalition with the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia, and then switched sides partnering with a small Citizen Option for Macedonia party, another VMRO-DPMNE satellite, until a change in party leadership in 2014. Prior to the elections on December 11, 2016 elections, the Serbian Progressive Party in Macedonia switched sides again and became the second ethnic Serbian coalition partner of the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia.

Interestingly, during the recent developments in Macedonia, and the full-fledged diplomatic crisis between Serbia and Macedonia in the summer of 2017, Serbian Progressive Party in Macedonia members were not as visible in the Serbian media as leadership of the smaller and less consequential, Democratic Party of Serbs in Macedonia party.

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206 Serbian Progressive Party in Macedonia. Available at: https://sr.wikipedia.org/sr-el/%D0%A1%D1%80%D0%BF%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B0_%D0%BD%D0%BD%D0%9C%D0%BD%D0%B3%D0%B0%D0%BA%D0%B6%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B8.
13. Montenegro: Key Obstacles to the Stabilization and Democratization

General Information and Short Background

Montenegro occupies 13,810 square kilometers, and has 622,388 inhabitants. Its military has 1,950 active personnel and 400 reserve personnel. Montenegro became NATO’s newest member on June 2017. In accordance with its 2007 constitution, Montenegro is not a nation state; rather, it is the state of, “free and equal citizens, members of peoples and national minorities who live in Montenegro: Montenegrins, Serbs, Bosniaks, Albanians, Muslims, Croats, and others.” While the official language in Montenegro is Montenegrin, the constitution stipulates that Serbian, Bosnian, Albanian, and Croatian are in official use. It means that those languages can be used within the government, including in courts, parliament, ad administration, as well as in schools and universities.

The latest census conducted in Montenegro was in 2011 and revealed following ethnic composition: Montenegrins 44.98%, Serbs 28.73%, Bosniaks 8.65%, Albanians 4.91%, Muslims 3.31%, Roma 1.01%, and Croats 0.97%.\(^\text{207}\)

Security System Structures

The national security system of Montenegro is regulated by the constitution and respective laws and bylaws for its implementation. The system of national security is under democratic and civilian control. The basic elements of the national security system are: the parliament, the president, the government, the Defence and Security Council, the security forces, the forces for action in emergency situations, the National Security Agency, the Public Prosecutor’s Office and the courts. Security forces include the army and police.\(^\text{208}\) Montenegro is the 29\(^\text{th}\) member of the Alliance.

Since Montenegro regained independence in 2006, security sector reform has intensified. Pursuant to the country’s constitution, the army and the security services are subject to democratic and civil control. Additionally, it stipulates that, inter alia, the parliament proclaims a state of war and a state of emergency, adopts the national security strategy and defense strategy, decides on the use of Montenegrin army units in international forces, supervises the army and security services, and ratifies international agreements.

\(^{207}\) Official census results: Montenegrins 44.98 percent, Serbs 28.73 percent. Vijesti online. July 2011. Available at: \url{http://www.vijesti.me/tv/zvanicni-rezultati-popisa-crnogoraca-4498-odsto-srba-2873-odsto-28461}.

The most significant improvement related to the security sector’s democratic accountability was made possible with the adoption of the 2010 law on parliamentary oversight of the security and defense sector. This empowered the standing parliamentary Security and Defence Committee to oversee the work of the entire security sector. In line with the law, the committee, inter alia, monitors the activities of bodies and institutions, conducts consultative and control hearings and initiates parliamentary inquiries in the area of security. It examines the annual reports produced by the Ministry of Defence, the army, the National Security Agency, the police administration, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Public Administration, as well as bills, other regulations and general acts, and related information on the execution of the budget. It also monitors the political, ideological and interest neutrality of their work, considers nominations for managerial positions, and gives opinions, proposals and suggestions in the preparation of the security budget bill. One of the conclusions is focused on the work of the Security and Defense Committee where is primarily hindered by its increased political focus which overshadows its efforts to create a transparent and accountable security sector.

According the latest report on assessment of police integrity in Montenegro conducted in 2016 and published by Institute Alternative, parliamentary oversight of the police deteriorated that year.

The report concluded that Montenegro has a complex system of internal and external oversight of the work of the police. In 2016, this system was characterized by: insufficient cooperation and exchange of information between the oversight bodies; insufficient effects of their control, conclusions and recommendations; and – as a result of too many actors – citizens’ dilemmas as to the proper body to whom to report abuse, corruption or excessive use of police powers. Although some progress has been made, the oversight

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bodies have yet to achieve the necessary efficiency in the application of their powers.\footnote{Full Assessment of Police Integrity in Montenegro. Available at: http://pointpulse.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Assessment-of-Police-Integrity-in-Montenegro-2016.pdf.}

In the beginning of June 2017, and despite Russian opposition, Montenegro formally becomes the 29th member of NATO at a ceremony in Washington. On the occasion, Prime Minister Duško Marković said that accession, “is a historic event for a country and a nation which endured enormous sacrifices in the 19th and 20th centuries in order to defend their right to a free life; the right to decide on our own future; the right to be recognized by the world under our own name and with our national symbols.”\footnote{Defying Russia, Montenegro finally joins NATO. The Associated Press. June 2017. Available at: http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/defying-russia-montenegro-finally-joins-nato-47837516.}

In order to become a member of NATO, Montenegro overcame Russian hostility. Russia considers Montenegro in its special zone of interest, and attempted to prevent the NATO integration of Montenegro by backing a coup attempt in October 2016. Russia has also threatened economic and political retaliation, including a campaign to undermine the Montenegrin tourism industry, which relies heavily on Russian visitors. However, accepting Montenegro into NATO further diminishes Russia’s influence in Southeast Europe, and blocks it from accessing warm seas in Europe, which could be used as staging grounds for military interventions in the Middle East. Besides that, it is expected that Montenegro’s membership in NATO, “will support greater integration, democratic reform, trade, security, and stability with all of its neighbors.”\footnote{Ibid.}

Montenegro achieved Euro-Atlantic integration as a result of the consistent determination of its political leadership and citizens, and also because many ethnic groups and their political representatives complied with the external political orientation of the country. However, this was not the case with the Serbian ethnic community and their representatives. The structure and constitution of Montenegro is less complicated than in other Western Balkans countries, which enabled it act on the majority’s political will. The most recent data from June 2017 show that Montenegro has opened 28 chapters in EU integration process, meaning that only 7 additional need to be addressed.\footnote{Montenegro’s status by negotiation chapters. EU delegation in Montenegro. June 2017. Available at: http://www.delmne.ec.europa.eu/upload/images/poglavljamnebig.jpg.}

\“The NATO story in Montenegro, or better said NATO deception, is not finished, as some, even in the opposition, point out, it has just begun, and in the upcoming period, we must do everything to internationalize as much as possible, refresh and lift to a much larger level.\”

Marko Milacic, founder, Movement for neutrality of Montenegro
Nonetheless, the politicization of ethnicity in the sense of political participation of ethnic groups in Montenegro through the Serbian List coalition and intensive, lasting, and direct Russian influence demonstrate that such political orientation could be dangerous in different geopolitical circumstances, for example, when there are foreign state and non-state actors attempting to stall democratization, stabilization, and the Euro-Atlantic integration of the country.

**Basic Facts About Montenegro and NATO**

*Note: For the purpose of this Report, CEAS commissioned expert to contribute with following paragraphs written by Vesko Garčević – member of CEAS advisory board, professor of the practice of International Relations at Frederick Pardee School of Global Studies and Former Ambassador of Montenegro in Brussels (NATO) and Vienna (OSCE), as well as former National coordinator for NATO within the Cabinet of Prime Minister and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro. Based on this report, Mr. Vesko Garčević testified before Senate Committee on Intelligence in June 2017 on Russian efforts to interfere in Montenegro’s 2016 election.*

Since Montenegro regained independence in 2006, joining NATO has been one of two Montenegro’s major foreign policy goals, with the second being the membership in the EU. Montenegro joined the Partnership for Peace in December 2006, shortly after. The country was invited to join the Membership Action Plan in December 2009. The Membership Action Plan is a NATO program of advice, assistance, and practical support tailored to the individual needs of countries wishing to join the Alliance. It is a useful mechanism devised to facilitate reform processes that a country needs to undertake in order to join NATO. It creates an environment for close cooperation and consultation between the NATO Member States and an aspiring country.

Montenegro began its first Membership Action Plan cycle in 2010 with the submission of its first Annual National Program. Through six Membership Action Plan cycles, Montenegro made a significant progress in areas that are seen as crucial for future membership, including reinforcing the rule of law, meeting NATO standards in security sector reforms, strengthening the judiciary, and fighting corruption and organized crime. Montenegro’s NATO reform agenda and its EU agenda have been strongly entwined. In the final phase of the integration, NATO called the European Commission to provide its opinion of the country’s progress in the areas encompassed by Chapter 23 and 24, which are central to the EU accession process.

The turning point in the case of Montenegro occurred in September 2014, when the NATO heads of state and government made the decision to establish focused and intensified talks with Montenegro. The decision recognized the progress that Montenegro made in pursuing reforms, promoting regional cooperation which is one of conditions for membership, and contributing to international security. Intensive cooperation throughout 2015 and fur-
ther reforms allowed Montenegro to receive a formal invitation for membership in NATO in December 2015. On May 19, 2016, Allied foreign ministers signed the Accession Protocol for Montenegro. Following the signature of the Protocol, Montenegro obtained invitee status, allowing its representatives to participate as observers in Allied meetings. Montenegro then became a member of NATO in June 2017, giving it the same decision-making powers as all other Allies.

Montenegro’s membership appears to have been an unstoppable, irreversible, and smooth process, but this was not always the case. Besides a demanding, overarching process of reforms which made Montenegro eligible for the Alliance, the country’s direction towards NATO has been continuously challenged from within by political actors in the country that do not support its bid for a membership. Since 2015, it has also been challenged by Russia as a part of its broader strategy to roll back NATO and EU enlargement while regaining influence in countries that aspire to join those organizations.

Montenegro has a particularly interesting position in Moscow’s eyes. Its geographical location and the statehood history make Montenegro far more relevant in the Balkans’ context than one may expect based on its small size. The Russian request for a naval facility in Bar or Kotor proves why Moscow looks at Montenegro’s NATO membership with displeasure.

In September 2013, the Russian Federation made what then-Russian ambassador in Montenegro, Andrey Nesterenko, described as, “a request” to “discuss the terms of allowing Russian warships temporary moorage at the ports of Bar and Kotor for refueling, maintenance, and other necessities.” Moscow’s request was prompted by the war in Syria and the uncertain future of the Russian naval facility in the Syrian port city of Tartus. Montenegro rejected the request in December of that year. The importance of such facilities in the Mediterranean was demonstrated in October 2016 when the Russian carrier, the Admiral Kuznetsov, and its battle group were denied refueling in European ports on their way to support the Russian military effort in Syria.
The Russian Media Campaign

Russia considers Podgorica’s decision to join NATO as an unlikable development in the Western Balkans though the decision of the Alliance to open door for Montenegro did not come as a surprise. Moscow’s stress grew as Montenegro became closer to NATO membership. To influence the opinion of Serbs in Montenegro, Russia opened a number of Serbian-language media offspring including Sputnik and Russia Today. Most of the Russian media outlets in the Balkans are located in Serbia. There are more than 100 Moscow-backed organizations and media outlets active in Serbia at present.

Russian media developed a twofold campaign with a set of messages for the international public and another for Montenegrin citizens. For the international public, Montenegro is depicted as a highly corrupted, insecure, and problematic state lagging behind its neighbors, particularly Serbia. NATO’s decision to invite Montenegro to join the Alliance was depicted as an example of double standards and a move motivated exclusively by Western interests in challenging Moscow and showing disrespect for its international position. In messages for a domestic use, the Montenegrin government is described as a treacherous and corrupt pawn in the hands of the United States and NATO, not being worthy of support. Montenegro’s current orientation is portrayed as the betrayal of a traditional ally, and Montenegrin leaders are painted as traitors, willing to give up Montenegrin identity and the dignity of its citizens.

Exploiting the long tradition of good relations between the two countries as well as their cultural similarities and religious proximity, Russia penetrates Montenegrin society through the Serbian Orthodox Church, which plays an important social and political role among its members. The Church is used to promote, “the values of Eastern Christianity” and present them fundamentally contradictory to the Western world, including the EU and NATO. The Church downplays the fact that several Orthodox states have been already admitted to NATO, emphasizing good Orthodox nations linked to Russia and deflecting attention from the fallen ones, including Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Georgia. This campaign, coupled with open political and financial support for pro-Russian political parties in Montenegro, appears an obvious attempt to reverse the pro-Western trajectory of the state and prevent it from joining NATO.


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The Coup Plot

*Note: For the purpose of this Report, CEAS commissioned expert to contribute with following paragraph written by Tamara Nikčević, a Yugoslavian journalist who, for the past twenty years, has worked at Television Montenegro, Belgrade weeklies NIN and Vreme, Sarajevo magazine Dani, Newsweek, Pobjeda, Nova ekonomija. She is also the author of the book ‘Barren islands of Jovo Kapičić’, published in 2009 in Montenegro, Serbia, Croatia, B&H and sold in more than 40,000 copies.

The coup plot in October 2016 was the culmination of more than 18 months of synchronized actions. On October 16, 2016, Montenegro held its parliamentary elections. The night before the elections, the former commander of the Serbian Gendarmerie, Bratislav Dikić and 19 other Serbian citizens were arrested and accused of plotting a coup. Plotters disguised in police uniforms were preparing to storm the Montenegrin Parliament and create mayhem by shooting at citizens waiting for the election results. Some of the plotters, including Aleksandar Sindelić, the supposed founder of a pro-Russian organization in Serbia called The Serbian Wolves, admitted to participating in the plot and described the plan to overthrow Montenegro’s government, murder then-Montenegrin Prime Minister Milo Đukanović and put into power political groups that oppose Montenegro’s NATO membership. Sindelić confessed his key role in, “recruiting other members of the organization, transferring money between the organizers and members of the group, providing weapons, phones, buying police equipment, uniforms, shields, batons, body armors, tear gas, gas masks, and other equipment that would be used by the group members during the attack on the Parliament.” According to police sources, Sindelić received 200,000 euros from Russians and distributed the money to members of the criminal group. Dikić, for example, received 15,000 euros.

219 Statements of the Montenegrin Supreme State Prosecutor and the Special Prosecutor and Interview of the Special Prosecutor with the Montenegrin TV Vijesti. 17/18/20 October.

Russia’s long-term strategy is to drag its rivals’ involvement down to a level that would make countries of the Region subjects to Moscow’s interference. This part of Europe has long been low on the list of American priorities and any further American retreat in the form of a deal with Russia or a withdrawal into isolationism, followed by EU negligence, may have lasting adverse implications for the Western Balkans as well as European security. This is why Montenegro’s membership in NATO is significant for other aspiring Western Balkan states. It keeps the hope of enlargement alive against a confrontational backdrop.

Montenegro’s chief special prosecutor, Milivoje Katnić, on November 18 identified the two Russians as Eduard Shirokov and Vladimir Popov and accused them of organizing the plot. Montenegrin officials alleged that Shirokov and Popov met in Moscow on September 26 with Sinđelić in order to arrange the plot and provide him with the necessary money. Both of them were in Serbia at the time of the elections in Montenegro. Though Belgrade denied their deportation, in accordance with diplomatic sources, they were deported from Serbia soon after the visit of the former head of Russia’s Federal Security Service and the current head of the Security Council, Sergei Petrushev, to Belgrade on October 26.

On February 16, 2017, Katnić, in an interview with Montenegro’s private television channel Atlas TV, stated that Montenegrin officials have evidence that Russia’s Federal Security Service was involved in the attempted coup. He disclosed that the two Russian individuals were Russian Military Intelligence Service agents. According to Katnić, Sismakov was the alleged mastermind behind the failed. He formerly served as Russia’s deputy military attaché in Poland and was deported 2014 for espionage. Sismakov is also known as Eduard Shirokov, and was issued a passport under the different name by Russian authorities. His whereabouts, as well as those of Popov, are unknown.

In the same interview Katnić named another alleged plotter: Nemanja Ristić, who seems to have been connected to Russia’s Federal Security Service. His task was to recruit a team and send it to Montenegro. Ristić is wanted by Montenegro for attempted terrorism. On December 12, he was photographed by the Serbian media standing near Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov during a visit with Serbian far-right groups. Ristić and

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Predrag Bogićević, another suspect, are still at large in Serbia despite being listed on the Interpol Red Notice.\textsuperscript{224}

Despite its efforts and investments, Moscow has made no measurable progress in persuading Montenegro to join its side and it has seemingly lost the possibility of having a strategically significant outlet on the Adriatic Sea. Montenegro’s membership in NATO is just one step towards the country’s full Euro-Atlantic integration. Montenegro’s membership in NATO and the EU will create a solid foundation for its future. Its trajectory towards the West does not necessitate losing Montenegrin identity or the corrosion of its religious and cultural characteristics, as opponents of Euro-Atlantic integrations frequently say. Rather, it means a strategic shift towards democratic values and processes such as rule of law, checks and balances, and a free market economy. It means strong institutions, not strong leaders, and a strong Parliament, not a strong party. It means more chances for all, not a big chance for few.

That said, the game is not over in the Balkans for NATO’s open door policy or the EU’s enlargement policy. Russia should not have a veto right on the expansion of Euro-Atlantic structures, but it demonstrated that it has the capacity to threaten, influence, and subvert those processes. The Balkans is one of several European playgrounds between Moscow on one side, and the United States and the EU on the other. Russia’s long-term strategy is to drag its rivals’ involvement down to a level that would make countries of the Region subjects to Moscow’s interference. This part of Europe has long been low on the list of American priorities and any further American retreat in the form of a deal with Russia or a withdrawal into isolationism, followed by EU negligence, may have lasting adverse implications for the Western Balkans as well as European security.

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**Attempted Weaponization of Serbs in Montenegro: The Role of Serbia and Russia**

Among the reasons why Montenegro managed to meet all the criteria to enter NATO, apart from firm political will of the political leadership, was exactly different –simple-structure from other countries of the Region. It also has no big open disputes with any neighboring country. It is by its constitution defined as a country of all its citizens and

\textsuperscript{224} Predrag Bogićević’s profile on Interpol’s wanted list. Available at: \url{https://www.interpol.int/notice/search/wanted/2016-78273}. 
The Constitution of Montenegro does not contain the concept of constituent nation, but only the term citizen and minority. The concept of constituent nation already proved to be inefficient and problematic in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina and it is obvious that the request for this declaration opens the door to the “Dayton-ization” of Montenegro.

Montenegro is a small country with 622,388 inhabitants and every artificial demographic change can cause severe social and political disturbances for this reason, CEAS has certain opinions regarding the principles of granting citizenship in Montenegro. For example, The Montenegrin Citizenship Act is among the most restrictive in the Western Balkans in terms of naturalization requirements and intolerance of dual citizenship. The issue is politically sensitive, especially in relation to Serbia, because dual citizenship would allow a large number of people from Montenegro who now live in Serbia to vote in Montenegrin elections. The politicization of the citizenship issue in the context of the adoption of the election law reflects the significance of the way voting rights are regulated in Montenegro. While Montenegro does not want people in Serbia to vote in its elections, the two countries have signed numerous other agreements benefitting people on both sides of the border. They may travel from one state to the other using only identification cards, for example. Montenegrin students can also obtain higher education in Serbia under the same conditions as Serbian nationals. Montenegro has not signed a dual citizenship agreement with any country in the Region.

Since 2015, Montenegro has dealt with false narratives directed at undermining its Euro-Atlantic integration process, democratization, and stabilization. Several foreign and domestic actors work together in these efforts. Concerned with Montenegro’s accession to NATO, Russia led series of hostile disinformation campaigns and spread propaganda through its regional branch of Sputnik, which is located in Belgrade. Russian actors together with Serbian political parties in Montenegro raised the question of the position of

Ethnic political parties exist and have threshold for entering to the Parliament. Luckily Albanian, Croatian and Bosniak minority parties have been in favor of Montenegro independence and further of its Euro-Atlantic path. Serbs political parties were vehemently against independence, and against NATO membership. NO to NATO is a legitimate political position if expressed with arguments in democratic setting, but this was not the case in Montenegro. Serbs political parties become bluntly weaponized by Kremlin, to the level of involvement in coup d’état.


the Serbs in Montenegro. Sputnik and pro-government media outlets in Serbia, such as Politika, support the amendment of the Montenegrin constitution to recognize Serbs as a constituent nation, as was suggested by Andrija Mandić, the leader of the New Serbian Democracy party and head of the Democratic Front.228

Mandić’s request is an attempt to include the position of the Serbs in the declaration on the rights of Serbs that is already being prepared by the official Serbian government, sponsored by Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić. Although in Serbia officials claim that a letter of the declaration has not yet been written, the New Serbian Democracy party announced that Mandić will participate in the development of this document. Therefore, Mandić’s public appeal is a certain platform of the New Serbian Democracy for the document’s development. In June 2015, former Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić, gave an indicative statement, saying that the rights of the Serbs in Montenegro must be, “solved by the Constitution.”229

In an article,230 Mandić delivered four key requests for the complete equality of the Serbs in Montenegro: a constitutionally and legally defined position of the Serbian people as a constituent nation, a constitutional definition of the Serbian language and Cyrillic alphabet as official, the proportional representation of Serbs in the institutions of the system in accordance with the results of the census, and a system of special ties with Serbia.

The Constitution of Montenegro does not contain the concept of constituent nation, but only the term citizen and minority. The concept of constituent nation already proved to be inefficient and problematic in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina and it is obvious that the request for this declaration opens the door to the “Dayton-ization” of Montenegro.

Mandić and Milan Knežević, the current president of Democratic People’s Party, received an invitation by the Sergei Zheleznak, the deputy secretary general of United Russia, to be guests of the party leadership in late September in Moscow.231 This announcement is a clear manifestation of the increased number of encounters involving Russian officials and Serbian opposition, which is suspected to be involved in attempted coup.

Additionally Mandić and other officials of Democratic Front made an official visit to Russia in December 2016. During the visit they were welcomed by the deputy speaker of Russia’s Duma, Pyotr Tolstoy. Mandić and Tolstoy discussed the current social and political situation in Montenegro, pointing out that the October 16 elections were not held


in a democratic environment, “but in the atmosphere of a staged scandalous coup attempt in the apparent organization of the regime of Milo Đukanović, which further deepened the general crisis in the country.” Mandić continued, saying, “the Democratic Front, as the strongest and most organized political alliance under the brutal attacks of state terror, is determined to continue the democratic fight against the totalitarian system of Milo Đukanović, who, because of his personal interests and privileges, managed to disrupt his relations with Russia, our proven long-time friend and ally.”

In March 2017, the Special State Prosecutor of Montenegro started an investigation against the leader of Democratic Front because of dubious contracts that the party had made with television and the daily newspaper Vijesti during the campaign that preceded the parliamentary elections. In addition to controversial contracts, the prosecution is examining the entire pre-election campaign of the Democratic Front under the suspicion that it was financed from abroad through dubious cash transactions. A controversial businessman from Niksić, Miodrag Daka Davidović, is also mentioned in this case considering that he was the one financing campaign of Democratic Front.

At the same time, the government of Serbia opened the Serbian House in Podgorica in June 2017. This was finalized through an agreement between President Vučić and Mandić. Serbian officials described the Serbian House as the seat of institutions and organizations established to preserve the cultural and national identity of the Serbian people. It will include: Matica srpska, Institute for Serbian Culture, Serbian National Council, Association of Serbian Writers, Serbian Television, Serbian Radio, Newspapers, Portals, Serbian Cultural Center, and other institutions. Although it is said that Serbian House will be cultural Center it has been registered as company.

According to media in Montenegro, Davidović is also opening a daily newspaper, a television channel, and a portal whose editorial policy will be close to the opposition and Democratic Front. Davidović is well known in Montenegro as a supporter of the Democratic Front and a friend of the Russia and Serbian Orthodox Churches. These concerns will be connected with Serbian House, as they will use its high technology infrastructure

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233 Ibid.


235 Ibid.

236 Miodrag Daka Davidović is controversial businessman from Niksić with close ties to Russia and Democratic Front.


238 Ibid.

239 Davidovic is founding a media concern to help DF. CDM. August 2017. Available at: https://www.cdm.me/politika/davidovic-osnova-medijski-koncern-da-pomogne-df-u/.
for broadcasting, but representatives of Serbian House denied that Serbian House will be headquarter of Daka’s media concern.\textsuperscript{240} The controversial businessman completely closed the financial structure for the media concern, since the government of Serbia paid him a full amount for a Serbian House in the name of buying space in Davidović’s building.\textsuperscript{241}

In the light of Mandić’s requests for a new declaration, the idea of declaring and defending Serbian cultural legacy and language should be seen as a mask for an agreement with the international community on Kosovo. Recent history regarding politicized ethnicities in the Region should indicate that this should be a cause for concern.

\textsuperscript{240} Davidović establishes a media concern. Pobjeda. August 2017. Available at: \url{http://www.pobjeda.net/protected/listalica/2017-09-05/files/assets/basic-html/page-2.html#}.

\textsuperscript{241} Ibid.
14. Croatia: Key Obstacles to the Stabilization and Democratization

*CNote: For the purpose of this Report, CEAS commissioned expert to contribute with following paragraphs written by Fayez Risheg, Director of Croatian-based think tank, the Center for Development Cooperation, and member of CEAS advisory board.*

Croatia occupies 56,594 square kilometers, and has 4,284,889 inhabitants. According to the US Central Intelligence Agency’s World Factbook, Croatia’s population is 90.4% Croat, 4.4% Serb, 4.4% other (including Bosniak, Hungarian, and Slovene), and .8% unspecified. Croatia’s military has 15,771 active personnel. Croatia became the first Western Balkan state to achieve NATO membership when it joined the Alliance in April 2009. It was also the first Western Balkan state to achieve EU membership when it joined in June 2013. Croatia is still the only Western Balkan state to have membership in both Euro-Atlantic structures.

Croatia held last general election in fall of 2016, when the HDZ beat the SDP against all odds to win another mandate after its Karamarko government imploded in a series of inexplicable self-goals. And an anniversary is always a good moment for stock taking, so let’s see where Croatia is today, compared to a year ago.

Before the 2016 elections, the HDZ held a government in coalition with the Most (“The Bridge of Independent Lists”). Most burst into the political scene as a bit of a surprise, promising to hold both major parties to account and only cooperate with the one (or both) that would agree to their program of reforms. As, to everyone’s surprise, they took 17 seats in the parliament, they could and did hold both major parties hostage for a week or two. But then, whether for reasons given or because of the similarities of general outlook, they hitched their wagon to the HDZ and, true to form, held the Orešković government at gunpoint until the then-HDZ leader Karamarko collapsed his own cabinet. HDZ ratings went through the floor and its arch-rival SDP got a second lease on life.

After HDZ elected the new leadership and made the usual public promises to fight corruption, clean up the government, reform taxes and local administration and above all be a completely different, centrist conservative party, it won a surprising victory over SDP and formed a new government with the Most. This time there was much less courting between the two, as the SDP could not even pretend it could put up a fight to woo Most away from HDZ.

242 Armed Forces of the Republic of Croatia. Available at: http://www.osrh.hr/#rubData/HTML/HR/ONAMA/OP%C3%83%81NITO/20170811_Ljudski_resursi/Ljudski_resursi_HR.htm.
The new cabinet came in with a major project of reforming the tax system, and while that was in the making, trouble again started brewing quietly between HDZ and Most. Several months into the new mandate, the largest Croatian conglomerate Agrokor collapsed. Since Minister of Finance Marić was, in his previous life, Agrokor’s VP for international finances Most accused him of being compromised and unfit for office. PM Plenković threw the Most ministers calmly out, and a short parliamentary battle ensued while HDZ was cementing its power. This was done with the support of a few disgruntled individuals from other parties, but ultimately HDZ secured its government by luring over several deputies of its traditional enemy the HNS. The HNS got the posts of DPM and Minister of Education, and apparently a promise that the government would get rid of the Nazi iconography that had started gripping the country again. It also got a pledge from the SDP never to work with it again, and the separation of five of its most prominent MPs into a new party. Bearing in mind the HNS’ dismal numbers lately, this may well be their swan song unless they find a new sponsor.

In the meantime the self-assessed biggest achievement of the Plenković government, the tax reform, suffered a blow when the property tax part started getting closer to actual implementation. A combination of communication errors, poor preparations, and popular resistance led Plenković to back down from starting the new tax on January 01, 2018, ostensibly to “better communicate” but quite possibly to avoid a voter backlash in case of early elections. In terms of the budget, the postponement should have no visible effects anyway, if one is to trust the Government’s public projections which claim it is basically a reorganization of existing local taxes. Interestingly enough, the main campaign was led by a former advisor to Plenković’s predecessor Orešković, who prepared the tax reform together with Finance Minister Marić. It is not clear if that indicates an organized rebellion of the former cabinet or if it is just a display of common opportunism.

But a more serious blow must be a recent announcement of Valamar Resorts, one of the biggest investors in tourism in Croatia, who cancelled its various investments worth an estimated Kn 2 billion because of the “uncertain tax environment” (probably referring to introduction of the full 25% VAT rate on tourism). This prompted the normally calm Minister of Finance to publicly vent his frustration, but apart from the impact of the cancelled projects, along the same lines, towards the end of 2016 and just a few months into the new mandate, a group of right wing veterans installed a commemorative plaque with a Nazi salute in the inscription. The opposition, at that time including the HNS, demanded its immediate removal, and the government responded by establishing a committee.
it might have more reaching consequences if other investors of that size decide to follow Valamar’s suit.

For now, the Ministry of Finance claims the budget is being filled at a satisfactory rate, thanks in part to the stabilizing effect of the new government which enabled it to refinance some of its debt at a more favorable rate. But the overall budget deficit seems to hover around the same mark, together with unemployment and other macroeconomic figures.

On the day it received a negative ruling from a Swiss arbitration court in its complaint against the Hungarian MOL, the government announced it intends to renationalize the state oil company INA. Of course, the budget for 2017 (and the Budget Guidelines for 2018 and 2019) include no provision for such a major purchase. The Government promptly found the money in a planned IPO of the national electricity provider HEP. Critics pointed out that the 25% IPO estimated at EUR 500-700 million would bring nowhere near enough cash to buy INA (estimated at around EUR 2-3 billion), and that the money eventually raised would be needed by the HEP for investment and modernization without which the company might fall into disrepair. Other critics asked why the Government thought it a good idea to buy INA, which had visibly deteriorated over the past six or seven years, pointing out that energy security can be achieved in many other ways. In the meantime, the European Commission put the issue of the INA privatization law to the European Court of Justice since Croatia failed to amend the law in accordance with Commission recommendations. And another arbitration, worth apparently somewhere around Kn 1.2 billion, is yet to end in Washington. It is possible that the Government was motivated by a combination of the two factors, where the perceived losses that might come from two lost arbitrations could well offset the monies needed to buy INA outright. Of course, the issue of what to do with a decrepit oil behemoth would remain on the table.

The final blow related to INA came from Hungarian Government, when Hungary refused to back Croatia’s bid for membership of the OECD. That being neither here nor there, as Croatia doesn’t really stand to gain or lose much by this, we were more concerned by surprise voiced by the Croatian Government and the President. As it is highly unlikely that diplomatic and other services of both countries failed to communicate such a decision,
which among the EU Member States could be seen as almost open hostility, we wonder very much what prompted surprise at the top level of Croatian government.

Another major legislative achievement was to be the overhaul of the veterans’ related legislative package. The stated intent was to consolidate various rules related to the veteran population, and help those who could not obtain full benefits. In addition, the Government stated that it wished to clean up the status of veterans who fought in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This, according to Government’s figures, concerns around 505,000 people, slightly over 12% of the total population of Croatia, plus an unknown number of HVO veterans. Although the Government claims these benefits will cost no more than half a billion per year, this figure seems somewhat light as it would allow for only about 1,000 Kuna per veteran in total expenditure. Since this is clearly impossible, the question of actual cost for now remains unanswered. In addition, the Government figures are somewhat confusing as various reports and officials quote different numbers at various occasions, oscillating by more than 10%. The move is mostly seen as payback to the veterans who camped outside SDP ministries while the SDP was in power. The veterans sieged the SDP government for almost two years. In addition, one of the critical votes that got the Plenković government through belongs to a retired HVO general known for his hard line rhetoric. He made it clear up front that he demanded back payments to HVO soldiers in exchange for his vote. Of course the issue of Croatian soldiers in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains politically sensitive for obvious reasons, especially now that the court case of Prlić et al. is still open at the ICTY.

Along the same lines, towards the end of 2016 and just a few months into the new mandate, a group of right wing veterans installed a commemorative plaque with a Nazi salute in the inscription. The opposition, at that time including the HNS, demanded its immediate removal, and the government responded by establishing a committee.

But as more and more black shirts appeared in public, and more and more of the public got restless (including several major embassies, US among them), parties supporting the government, including those representing the ethnic minorities, started asking for the removal of the plaque more aggressively. As the government could not hold its seats without support of the right wing groups within its own ranks, PM Plenković came up with an interim solution – the plaque with the offensive salute was moved from the site of the former Jasenovac concentration camp to another memorial site in the vicinity. The issue prompted yet another round of discussions on whether the salute is related to the 1941-45 Nazi regime (it is, according to the Constitutional Court) and whether police should act and how. The church also got involved proposing introduction of the salute as an official salute of the armed forces, civil society organized anti-fascist marches, and the issue once again became highly political showing inability (some claim unwillingness, which would
On the international side, although led by former diplomats, Croatia seems to be at an all-time low in international relations. Relations with Slovenia are spolt by the Piran Bay arbitration scandal (where Croatia refuses the ruling of the arbitration court because Slovenian side was caught on tape trying to influence the arbiters), and possibly Agrokor’s long shadow. Relations with Bosnia are traditionally difficult, in particular as HDZ is constantly seen as pushing the “third entity” option and in addition getting into a difficult fight with Sarajevo over the Pelješac bridge. Relations with Hungary are difficult because of the MOL scandal, and relations with Serbia are traditionally complicated and now apparently even more. It seems that the diplomatic skill amassed at the top of the pyramid (the President, the Prime Minister and the Speaker are all former diplomats) is not sufficient to improve this situation. In addition, PM Plenković was criticized because of his visit to Ukraine earlier this year, where he offered to share Croatian experience in reintegration of territories held by rebels. This offer predictably angered Moscow and Plenković took some beating on the issue.

At the same time, the health system slid back in terms of waiting lists which grew by more than 300% in just under two years, going from 380,000 to 1.2 million (more than a quarter of total population), and financing, where the total debt of the health sector is now estimated at around Kn 7 billion with arrears reaching Kn 4.5 billion (almost 3.5% of the budget, and two times as much as in 2015). In conjunction with general lack of initiative and investment cost projections rising several times on unclear grounds, the sector seems to be sliding backwards too fast to stop the crash. It also seems indicative of other sectors, where one cannot really see much happening apart from a few public blunders.

One such blunder was the Ministry of Agriculture attempt to control imports of agricultural goods from neighboring countries (Serbia and Bosnia primarily, it would seem). Although SAA’s the EU signed with both countries ban new barriers to trade, Croatia apparently thought it could slide some new levies under the radar. This did not work and the new rules had to be rolled back within a week as the countries of the Region teamed up on Croatia and Bruxelles understandably refused to back the move.

The most dangerous event of the current Government was, however, the collapse of the retail giant Agrokor. Although the Government continued to back it well into the first quarter, it seems that Agrokor could not be saved. The demise was, strangely enough, announced first by the Russian Ambassador to Zagreb, who apparently out of the blue appeared in full military regalia to announce that “We backed Agrokor long enough, and will not continue to do so”. It was all downhill from there, and the Government responded by introducing Lex Agrokor, publicly justifying the move by “saving 60,000 jobs and those depending on it” (the figure itself is
slightly exaggerated as Agrokor’s own reports quote 27,000 jobs in Croatia, and a lot of them in highly profitable companies).

The law seems like basic Chapter 11 protection well known in the UK and the US, but with one strange addition – instead of the company choosing its administrator, it is the Government who proposes the administrator to the court, receives reports and advises on further moves. Many are wondering if this direct involvement might lead to direct liabilities for the budget. For now, the Government is firmly rejecting any liabilities, but as lawsuits just started coming in, the full extent of potential liabilities is yet to be seen. And those liabilities might bring the budget to its knees, as apparently Agrokor’s outstanding debt reaches over Kn 40 billion, and the full amount is yet to be determined. Since Agrokor owns significant assets in the Region, it remains to be seen how regional governments will handle the matters once it comes to serious litigations. So far, it seems that Slovenian courts accepted at least parts of Lex Agrokor, while there might be difficulties ahead in Serbia.

On the bright side, Croatia did experience its best tourist season ever, and it is not over yet. For the first time in its independent history, Croatia grossed over EUR 10 billion, and in spite of tourism companies warning that the increase of the VAT from 12 to 25% is going to cause serious losses.

But on the economic side, Agrokor was estimated to be responsible for between 15-20% of the GDP, INA for another 15% or so, and tourism at another 18-20%. So the three account for roughly half of the GDP of a small country that has no serious reserves to cushion any blows to the tourist market, and the two other main components are apparently collapsing.

On the international side, although led by former diplomats, Croatia seems to be at an all-time low in international relations. Relations with Slovenia are spoilt by the Piran Bay arbitration scandal (where Croatia refuses the ruling of the arbitration court because Slovenian side was caught on tape trying to influence the arbiters), and possibly Agrokor’s long shadow. Relations with Bosnia are traditionally difficult, in particular as HDZ is constantly seen as pushing the “third entity” option and in addition getting into a difficult fight with Sarajevo over the Pelješac bridge. Relations with Hungary are difficult because of the MOL scandal, and relations with Serbia are traditionally complicated and now apparently even more. It seems that the diplomatic skill amassed at the top of the pyramid (the President, the Prime Minister and the Speaker are all former diplomats) is not sufficient to improve this situation. In addition, PM Plenković was criticized because of his visit to Ukraine earlier this year, where he offered to share Croatian experience in reintegration of territories held by rebels. This offer predictably angered Moscow and Plenković took some beating on the issue. However, we believe this was not a blind move. Plenković served as a Chair of the EP Ukraine Committee, and is one of best informed diplomats in EU on the matters at stake. It is unthinkable that he would undertake any such moves without coordinating with other EU colleagues, especially those from conservative par-
ties. So we expect him to have at least some backing in that regard. For now, cooperation with other EU partners on Ukraine does not seem to be enough for Croatia not to be seen as a problem child of the Balkans who cannot play with others.

On the internal side, the current Government is still plagued by ghosts of World War II, and its own inability to put a stop to it. In addition, the country is ridden by corruption and white-collar crime scandals involving important names from politics, sport and business. But proceedings seem slow and perfunctory, and almost always collapsing to zero at some point in the proceedings, so the public seems to have little hope of progress. And Croatia still sports an extremely slow and inefficient judiciary with a backlog of cases that could stop Irma in its track.

So altogether, it seems that the HDZ Government has achieved its initial purpose of stabilizing the country (and in particular its finances) after the horrid mess of the Karamarko-Orešković government. But lack of political experience (all three heads of institutions are first-time election winners on this level, although highly experienced top level bureaucrats) and initiative seems to be showing through the cracks. The President is by now generally seen as a fringe figure bringing some mild embarrassment, and the Government seems unable to sort out some of the basic issues without tripping over itself repeatedly. Ministers are plagued by accusations of conflict of interest, but as the institutions that should deal with it seem less than fully efficient, nothing is likely to come out of any proceedings on that issue any time soon, certainly not soon enough to have any kind of reassuring effect.

But the Government is stable, and held in place more by lack of any opposition than by its own merits. The main opposition party, the SDP, does not seem able to recover from the election loss and changes to its leadership. The party itself seems to be aware of it, and attacks on the current head of the party have started intensifying lately. The grounds chosen are irrelevant, as it seems that at least a part of SDP leadership is determined to get rid of Bernardić at any cost and under any excuse. Apparently they see this as a last-ditch attempt to save the party from demise before next elections.

Other opposition parties are close to non-existent apart from Most, Živi Zid, and the eternal mayor of Zagreb, Mr Bandić. But Most seems to be spending its credit with the voters at an alarming rate, Živi Zid, although apparently sporting a clear neo-liberal agenda with conservative overtones seems unwilling to join any of the major parties in forming a coalition. And the minorities currently seem to be examining their theory that they should support the Plenković government and give it time to reform the right side of the political landscape.

So with ten points advantage over its closest rival, no real opposition, several small partners to choose from and almost a third of the popular vote, it is not clear why PM Plenković does not go for elections to solidify his position in the Parliament and his grip on the executive. This could help his personal position in the party as it would make it harder...
for his own hardliners to attack him if he wins again, and would make his government less dependent on whims of smaller partners who can bring it down at any moment (they, of course, know that doing that would see them out of their chairs probably for good). But for some reason or reasons, he seems reluctant to do so, at least for now. That decision might in the end be taken out of his hands by any of the partners supporting the government, such as the minorities who have been complaining recently of his inability to control the Nazi sympathizers in and around his party. But for now the government remains in place, even if for lack of any better alternative.
Conclusions and Recommendations

NATO and its Member States currently face substantial changes in the global security environment, including severe challenges such as revanchist Russia internal discord, manifested through Brexit. However, President Trump’s endorsement of NATO’s Article 5, the increasing consensus on the need for a new transatlantic bargain, the newly agreed areas of cooperation between NATO and the EU, and the implementation of the decisions taken at the Wales and Warsaw summits, are confirmations of NATO’s capacity to permanently adapt, and, more importantly, it is a confirmation of its enduring relevance.

Despite announcements of a more structured EU defense policy, there are still questions as to whether there is sufficient political will to carry it out. Difficulties in harmonizing each nation’s capacity planning and development will remain a major challenge for both the EU and NATO. Further developments in this direction should contribute to greater complementarity between NATO and the EU. Each action by the EU that could be seen as a zero-sum game in relation to NATO would play into the hands of Russia and other anti-NATO actors. It would also weaken the need for Europeans to press for closer and more explicit involvement by the United States in NATO.

Additionally, bearing in mind the arguments and trends leading to a multi-speed EU, which brings concerns about the Region’s EU perspective, as well as concerns about the outsourcing of the integration processes of some countries in the Region to certain EU Member States through the Berlin and ‘Berlin Plus’ processes and assistance mechanisms, the above-mentioned potential setbacks in future NATO and EU relations could impede the more coordinated and much needed NATO and EU political involvement in the Region. It would also create an opportunity for increased influence of non-democratic or even hostile foreign state and non-state actors in the Region.

The good news for the Western Balkans is that both the EU and NATO have mentioned the Region in their recent strategic documents, with both organizations expressing a commitment to the continuation of open door policies. In addition Member States, as well as the EU and NATO organizations themselves, are adjusting to the new strategic environment by agreeing on more collective efforts and joint cooperation in defense and security, on the basis of the December 2016 NATO Foreign Ministerial Conference, where the Allies agreed to move forward with more intensive cooperation on 42 proposals with the EU, which are now being implemented.

Several prominent think tanks and international bodies have made compelling cases for more engagement by the United States and EU in the Region, addressing such vital issues as the dangers of the West opting for political stability over democracy, weak regional governance, poor economic convergence capacities, high levels of youth unemployment, rampant corruption, and the unhealthy situation regarding the freedom of the media.
But rarely, if at all mentioned, are the underlying issues, such as the incomplete transitional justice processes, incomplete security sector reforms, constitutionally or otherwise embedded solutions that propel an illiberal politicization of ethnicities, and internationally led or sponsored processes that serve short-term goals but undermine the separation of powers, strengthening of independent institutions, and decision-making processes within them. This could, if not properly addressed, hinder the democratization of the Region and its deeper integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. Furthermore, all of these issues create a fertile ground for non-democratic and hostile hybrid and conventional obstructive actions conducted by state or non-state actors.

Since all the governments in the Region, elected through a series of not too irregular, if not entirely fair election processes, and most of their legitimate oppositions have pledged commitment to their countries’ integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, with most of them expressing the will to become fully-fledged EU and NATO members, NATO and its Member States can, with full legitimacy, address all of the above-mentioned underlying challenges, and provide incentives and capacities for the reforms that would overcome them.

By admitting Montenegro as its 29th Member State, NATO has demonstrated that it is ready to move forward in the changed political environment in the Western Balkans faster and bolder than any other global or regional actor. The fact that the newly-elected Macedonian government is already looking for ways to activate its NATO membership, exemplified through its upcoming meeting with the NATO leaders, confirms that NATO can and should be the leading actor in a sustained and comprehensive process of the stabilization and democratization of the Region.

Given these arguments as well as the present situation, in which regional societies are less resilient than those of EU and NATO Member States to newly emerging global threats and hostile hybrid operations, and that regional cooperation is still insufficient in many relevant areas, primarily defense and security, NATO can become more relevant than ever when it comes to ensuring strategic stability in Europe and the Western Balkans. Bearing in mind the new strategic environment, full integration into these structures should be a basic instinct response of all truly liberal and democratic forces in the Region.

To that end, CEAS recommends that NATO, the EU, or their Member States, depending on their respective capacities with regard to their further involvement in the Western Balkans, to:

- Demonstrate more confidence in and appreciation of the common values of the liberal order and practices in general, and apply them in resolving outstanding Western Balkan issues in particular;

- Increase harmonization of policies towards the Region in general, as well as towards individual states, in order to minimize the gap caused by the United Kingdom’s process of leaving the EU, which has already slowed the decision-making processes of
the EU, including those related to the Western Balkans. The prolonged process of decision-making can discourage Euro-Atlantic structures in the Region and be exploited by Russia and other actors for their agendas;

– Continue to assume more political leadership in the Region, given Montenegro’s accession to NATO and the current Macedonian government’s willingness to speed up its NATO membership process;

– Strike a better balance between legitimate short-term and tactical priorities in addressing emerging challenges and threats, such as those posed by Russia and other state and non-state actors as well as migration and refugee flows, and the common long-term goals of regional democratization;

– Encourage Scandinavian and Baltic states to pay more attention to Western Balkan affairs and, if possible, enhance their diplomatic presences in order to help the Region’s actors understand more clearly their positions and experiences regarding Russian policies, as well as to quell growing concerns that the Region has been outsourced to those EU Member States gathered around the Berlin Process. Estonia’s forthcoming presidency of the EU is a good time to start with this.

– Analyze thoroughly the moral, political, and security implications of the alarming state of affairs regarding transitional justice processes in the Western Balkans, as presented recently by Serge Brammertz, Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, and by regional organizations monitoring trials before the domestic courts, including challenges such as: the denial of crimes, the revisionism of history and glorification of war crimes, the deteriorating regional judicial cooperation, and the stalemate in war crimes trials before domestic courts;

– Prioritize and facilitate support for the comprehensive implementation of transitional justice mechanisms, considering them both as a security norm and a tool for security sector reform in the post-conflict Region, which is still heavily burdened with unresolved war crimes;

– Prioritize security sector reforms, including the establishment of robust democratic oversight in all regional countries, having in mind the legacy of war crimes and the security threats emanating from these circumstances, beginning with the fertile ground for recruitment of homegrown little green men by hostile external and internal state or non-state actors;

– Address more vigorously the lack of a common narrative about the new status of Kosovo among EU and NATO Member States, and analyze the setbacks caused by the failure of four NATO Member States to recognize Kosovo;

– Address more vigorously false Russian narratives about the causes, circumstances, and consequences of the NATO air campaign against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999, which have significant momentum and are amplified by actors in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, by even the so-called pro-EU political elite there;
Conclusions and Recommendations

- Analyze more carefully the dangers of the stalemate in visa liberalization and EU integration processes in Kosovo, caused by issues that could be resolved after Kosovo has advanced in the areas mentioned. The current situation is feeding the corrupt elite and encouraging their controversial governing. Removing some issues from the conditionality list would stop the current downward spiral in Kosovo internal affairs;

- Support the non-biased work of the newly-constituted Kosovo Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutor’s Office, which, under Kosovo law, have a specific mandate and jurisdiction over certain crimes against humanity, war crimes, and other crimes occurring between January 1, 1998 and December 31, 2000;

- Consider all repercussions of Kosovo’s current constitutional arrangement relating to the, “seats reserved for the political representation of ethnicities” in the Kosovo Parliament, along with increasing corruption, the expanding role of the Serbian government in decision-making processes, and the deprivation of the citizens of Kosovo, especially members of ethnic minorities, of the opportunity to vote for comprehensive political options that address local and global challenges;

- Consider the side-effects of the erosion of hard-won achievements in democratic practice and establishment independent institutions in Kosovo, as well as the excessive involvement of Serbia in decision-making, caused by the Brussels Agreement, and quickly seek other approaches that would overcome the current stalemate;

- Provide incentives for a final resolution of the Macedonia-Greece name dispute, more in line with historical facts than self-fulfilling narratives, including the obligation that the Albanians in Macedonia have an equal say on this issue, which has been exploited by both Macedonian and Albanian political elite more inclined towards enflaming ethnic divisions than pursuing Macedonia’s Euro-Atlantic integration;

- Help Macedonia to get back on track as quickly as possible and complete its NATO membership process;

- Support public and expert debate that can remove current disputes related to Macedonian constitution and other relevant documents’ stipulations related to the procedure of joining NATO;

- Address in a comprehensive manner, with a proposed roadmap, all obstacles emanating from the Dayton Peace Accord’s constitutional arrangements in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which hinder any meaningful and democratic decision-making processes, opening the door for the emergence of extreme nationalism and other non-democratic influences in Bosnia and Herzegovina’s affairs;

- Remind the Alliance for Changes coalition from Republika Srpska about its commitments stated in the 2014 coalition agreement related to meeting obligations stipulated in Bosnia and Herzegovina’s Membership Action Plan, which was the foundation for the composition of the ruling majority at the state level;
— Consider the revision of the Tallinn conditions related to the registry of military property, as it is impossible to implement them as they are currently stipulated;

— Follow in-depth the trials relating to the attempted coup in Montenegro, and support moves to counter continuing Russian hostility in this country;

— Take care not to tap into false narratives emanating from Russia or other stakeholders pursuing their own agendas, such as tales of, “the traditionally good relations between Serbia and Russia throughout history,” or, “the hundreds of extremely radicalized Muslims operating in various parts of the Region;”

— Pay greater attention to the number of foreign fighters traveling from the Western Balkans to East Ukraine, and support efforts to disable their sponsors and centers of operations;

— Avoid, in the absence of other measures, excessive appeasement of current political leaders prone to nationalism, revisionism, corruption, autocracy, support for Russian policies and goals, and the pursuit of their own interests by undercutting and undermining transatlantic regional forces and the Region’s Euro-Atlantic perspective;

— Help countries of the Western Balkans asses in due time possible obstacles in meeting the criteria for deeper integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, possibly caused by dealings with China;

— Be more active in countering disinformation and hostile propaganda and help countries of the Region become more included in these efforts.
Conclusions and Recommendations
Regarding Serbia

Acknowledging Serbia’s legitimate position of military neutrality; acknowledging that 79 United Nations members have not yet recognized Kosovo as an independent state, among them five EU and four NATO Member States; understanding the need to prioritize cooperation in addressing the increased refugee and migration flows and subsequent terrorist threats at the expense of previously agreed areas of cooperation; and warmly welcoming recent commitments by both sides for a continuation of the implementation of the current Individual Partnership Action Plan between Serbia and NATO, and the adoption of a new plan in due course, CEAS recommends NATO, the EU, or their Member States, depending on their respective capacities with regard to dealing with Serbia, to:

– Use the forthcoming Estonian EU presidency to introduce the wider Serbian public to current security challenges that the Baltic states are facing;

– Advocate and assist developing an internal consensus among EU Member States for opening Chapter 31 on Foreign, Security and Defense Policies sooner rather than later in the Serbia’s negotiation process with the EU;

– Insist on Serbia’s fulfillment of its obligations with regard to the criminal prosecutions of perpetrators of war crimes and the implementation of its National Strategy and Action Plan for War Crimes Prosecution, and insist on Serbia’s clear break with the legacy of those who participated in atrocities during the armed conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, since lack of progress in these fields has become a security issue too;

– Assume the role of a key stakeholder by supporting and coordinating the comprehensive security sector reform, bearing in mind that prolonged non-involvement can become a security threat, given the implications of the new geopolitical context in the Region;

– Provide incentives for public and expert debates about forthcoming changes in the Serbian Constitution and consider supporting the creation of an electoral system in Serbia that would reduce the effects of the de facto parallel political system of national councils of national minorities, which is the source of corruption and other non-democratic and illiberal practices that severely impede chances for the emergence of liberal globalist Euro-Atlantic forces in Serbia;

– Provide incentives for a debate about provisions in the new constitution that would not only enable the continuation of the EU integration process, but also leave room for the articulation of the aspirations of those who argue that Serbia should be more integrated into Euro-Atlantic structures;

– Assume the role of a facilitator in the forthcoming process of the adoption of the new National Security Strategy, which should not be reduced simply to the expectations
related to Serbia’s EU integration process. This process should enable comprehensive reflections on the new strategic environment, resulting in better understanding of threats and challenges and the need for strategic partnerships and membership in alliances;

– Enable more public events in Serbia that would address and analyze the trend of greater structural cooperation between NATO and the EU, with special focus on the 42 already agreed concrete proposals for implementation;

– Dispel the false perception of an unequal balance between the activities that Serbia conducts with NATO and its Member States on the one hand, and Russia and Belarus on the other, and clarify the type and purpose of these activities and exercises;

– Be more open in explaining current relations between Russia and NATO and its Member States, and how increasing Serbian cooperation and military exercises should be perceived in terms of Serbia’s democratization, position as a factor of stability, and rating as a reliable partner in countering terrorism and other threats and challenges;

– Set the record straight, as much as consensus among Member States permits, with regard to the geopolitical circumstances and causes that led to the NATO air campaign against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and its human toll and other consequences, in order to prevent a further drop in public support for NATO caused by externally and internally perpetuated false narratives significantly enhanced in the last few years, and perpetuated by Serbian officials and politicians in power as well as the opposition, academic community, and mainstream Serbian and Russian media;

– Acknowledge and confront Serbian leadership about their open door policy towards increasing non-democratic Russian soft power in Serbia;

– Draw on the positive experiences of Montenegro with regard to public perception of NATO, bearing in mind the unique and shared elements in the historical experience of Serbia and Montenegro with NATO, the war crimes burden, the public perceptions, the state’s decisions on issues related to the new status of Kosovo, and the new geopolitical context in which Montenegro’s NATO membership and accession to the EU, and Serbia’s integration process and implementation of the Individual Partnership Action Plan are unfolding;

– Engage more relevant stakeholders in Serbia in openly discussing Serbia’s cooperation with NATO in countering terrorism, participating in United Nations and EU-led missions, managing migration and refugee flows, implementing trust fund programs, and other related issues;

– Present, with more detail and more frequency, assessments of the current state of affairs in Serbia’s relations with NATO, especially with regard to the public diplomacy commitments that the Serbian government has assumed by adopting the Individual Partnership Action Plan;
– Support open debates with relevant Serbian stakeholders regarding the benefits for Serbia deriving from the implementation of the current Individual Partnership Action Plan, which, among other things, stipulates support for Serbia’s EU integration process, regional cooperation, cooperation with international organizations, improvements in the area of human rights, rule of law, emerging security challenges, economic reforms, and enhanced democratic control of armed forces, and all other issues related to defense and military;

– Present with more detail the position on the implementation of other segments of the Individual Partnership Action Plan, and provide arguments or positions as to why they have not been implemented more efficiently, going beyond the “ticking the boxes” approach assumed by Serbian officials in charge of its current implementation;

– Consider the allocation of more funds and political commitment in order to strengthen the capacities of the Office of the Council for National Security and Protection of Classified Information and other bodies in charge of classified information in ministries;

– Consider the allocation of more funds and political commitment in order to strengthen the capacities of those structures in charge of crisis management and emergency planning;

– Support the adoption of a new law on crisis management and reducing the risk from natural and other disasters, taking into consideration that the draft of this law was created in 2015;

– Consider the allocation of more funds and political commitment in order to strengthen the capacities of structures in charge of cybersecurity, the implementation of the current legislation in this area, and the possible amendment or adoption of new legislation;

– Consider the requests, as expressed by high-level Serbian officials, for more financial assistance in dealing with the consequences of the NATO bombing, short of any official reparations.
About CEAS

The Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies (CEAS) is an independent socio-liberal think-tank organization founded in 2007 in Belgrade, Serbia.

The motto which the CEAS follows in its work is, “Progress, Determination, Influence.”

**CEAS stands for:**

– Adoption of the principle of the precedence of individual over collective rights, with respect for the rights which individuals can only achieve through collective action;

– Strengthening of the secular state principle and promotion of a faithless understanding of the world;

– Development and preservation of a more open, freer, more prosperous and more cooperative international order founded on smart globalization.

**CEAS advocacy and research work is mostly focused on:**

– Contemporary Serbian, Regional and Trans-Atlantic foreign and security policies;

– Full Serbian membership in the EU and NATO;

– Comprehensive Serbian security system reform and robust democratic oversight of the system;

– Connection between security sector reform and transitional justice in the post-conflict societies like Western Balkans;

– Russian and other non-democratic influences on the stabilization and democratization of the Western Balkans;

– Promotion of Responsibility to Protect the international humanitarian and security doctrine;

– Overcoming of the democratic deficits of multiculturalism.

CEAS is the only member from the Region of South-Eastern Europe to have full membership in ICRtoP - the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect. The coalition brings together non-governmental organizations from all over the world to collectively strengthen the normative consensus for the doctrine of Responsibility to Protect (RtoP).

CEAS is a member of the Coalition for RECOM – a coalition comprising more than 1,800 organizations from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia, advocating for the founding of the Regional Commission for establishing facts about war crimes and other serious violations of human rights committed on the territory of the former Yugoslavia between 1991 and 2001.

CEAS has a wide media, institutional and social outreach, and has been quoted in leading prominent liberal media such as The New York Times, Washington Post, Politico, Spiegel etc. In December 2016 Politico put CEAS Director Jelena Milić on its annual POLITICO 28 list of people “who are shaping, shaking and stirring Europe”.

CEAS programs have been so far supported by: Open Society Fund (OSF); Think Tank Fund, Budapest; National Endowment for Democracy, USA; Rockefeller Brothers Fund, USA; European Commission; Balkan Trust for Democracy – GMF, Serbia; NATO Public Diplomacy Division; Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Serbia; Royal Norwegian Embassy in Belgrade; Visegrad Fund, Slovakia; Friedrich Naumann Foundation, Serbia; Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Serbia; USA Embassy in Serbia.

For more information about CEAS, its team and activities please visit the web site www.ceas-serbia.org. More information about pending and completed projects can be found directly at https://www.ceas-serbia.org/en/projects
Annex 1

*Note: Following chapter contains political and security framework of Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) of Republic of Serbia with NATO that was agreed in 2015 for the period of two years implementation.\(^{243}\)

Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP)

I. POLITICAL AND SECURITY FRAMEWORK

1.1. FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY

1.1.1. Cooperation with NATO/PfP

The Republic of Serbia intends to develop long-term, substantive and concrete cooperation with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) within the framework of Partnership for Peace Program (PfP). This partnership will contribute to achieving the strategic aims of ensuring security and long-lasting stabilization of the Western Balkans and process of its European integration.

Since joining the Partnership for Peace Program in 2006, the Republic of Serbia and NATO have steadily built their cooperation and dialogue. The Republic of Serbia considers the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) as a framework for further enhancing that cooperation, without membership aspirations; and as a tool for engaging in a widespread reform processes which will also facilitate and encourage bilateral and Alliance support and assistance. A Working group has been established for coordinating the implementation of IPAP.

The Republic of Serbia wishes to enhance its political dialogue with NATO and its PfP partners, in line with its national interests. It also sees value in enhanced practical cooperation in areas such as public diplomacy issues, emerging security challenges, the Building Integrity Initiative, a PfP Trust Fund to facilitate destruction and storage of surplus ammunition and implementation of UNSCR 1325. The Republic of Serbia will continue its good cooperation with the NATO Contact Point Embassy and the NATO Military Liaison office (MLO) in Belgrade with the view to facilitating such activities.

Cooperation between the Serbian Armed Forces and KFOR is very good and continues to develop in a positive manner. The Republic of Serbia has pointed out, and the Alliance has noted, its concern regarding NATO’s decisions to reduce the size of the KFOR footprint and to continue with the “unfixing” process for historical, cultural and religious sites. Unconditional freedom of movement for all the people is of general benefit and an objective of particular importance.

1.1.2.

EU integration process

Accession to the EU (EU) is a strategic foreign policy goal for the Republic of Serbia. As a modern democratic society, based on European values, the Republic of Serbia fully shares the values upon which the EU has been established and accepts the “Copenhagen criteria”. Democracy, social awareness, an open market economy, efficient state administration, the peaceful resolution of disputes and respect for other peoples and cultures; all represent essential values shared by the Republic of Serbia and the EU Member States.

The Republic of Serbia continues to make progress toward EU integration. It concluded a Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU in 2008; has implemented a Transitional Trade Agreement with the EU since 2009; and achieved candidate status for EU membership in March 2012. The SAA entered into force on 1 September 2013, giving the Republic of Serbia associated country status. In line with the June 2013 European Council decision to open accession negotiation with the Republic of Serbia, EU General Affairs Council adopted on 17 December 2013 the negotiation framework. The first Intergovernmental Conference between EU and the Republic of Serbia was held on 21 January 2014 in Brussels, marking the beginning of accession negotiations. This represents a historic step and a turning point in relations between the Republic of Serbia and EU.

In accordance with its proclaimed goal, the Republic of Serbia expresses its readiness to adopt and apply EU acquis and to implement the SAA. Administrative and institutional capacities for implementation of EU standards will be strengthened and the ability to implement EU programs and projects will be enhanced.

No matter how demanding and long-lasting, the process of EU integration remains the most important internal and international process for the Republic of Serbia’s further progress and its drive to modernize its society and advance its own democratic potential.

1.1.3.

Regional cooperation, relations with neighbors and other regional stability issues

Regional cooperation is a foreign policy priority for the Republic of Serbia.
The Republic of Serbia will continue to promote bilateral relations with its neighbors and countries of the Region through enhanced political dialogue and the improvement of economic and cultural cooperation, infrastructure links, and cross-border cooperation. Particular attention will be devoted to improving cooperation in the field of security and energy security. These activities will also take account of the recommendations and needs of the EU integration process.

The Republic of Serbia is a member of a large number of multilateral regional organizations, initiatives and agreements and remains fully committed to further strengthening regional cooperation. The Republic of Serbia is particularly interested in its cooperation in regional security initiatives and forums such as Center for Security Cooperation (RACVIAC), Southeast Europe Defence Ministerial Forum (SEDM), South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC), Migration, Asylum, Refugees and Regional Initiative (MARRI) and Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). The Republic of Serbia has shown its readiness to find a creative way to accommodate all representatives in Regional discussions and efforts will continue in that regard.

The Republic of Serbia is fully committed to contribute to the Regional stability. In April 2013 the Republic of Serbia’s active and constructive engagement in EU-facilitated dialogue resulted in First Agreement of principles governing the normalization of relations (the First Agreement), which was complemented in May by an Implementation plan. The implementation of the First Agreement has continued and has already brought some concrete and positive results on the ground, with the final aim to ensure a dignified life, security and prosperity for all citizens.

The ministries, special organizations and government services will take the necessary measures and actions to fully implement the agreement and will continue with the implementation of already agreed measures in the process of technical dialog. Ensuring unconditional freedom of movement for all the people remains of particular importance and will be the subject of continued cooperation.

1.1.4.

Cooperation with international organizations – UN, OSCE and Council of Europe

The Republic of Serbia is fully committed to the values that underpin the United Nations (UN), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and Council of Europe. It cooperates with each of these organizations to further the practical implementation of such values and standards, including through a range of reform initiatives. The Republic of Serbia will build its capacities for participation in international peace operations under the auspices and with the mandate of the UN. During its OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office in 2015, the Republic of Serbia will fully contribute to the achievement of the Organization’s goals and to the enhancement of comprehensive security. The Republic of Serbia has adopted 79 Council of Europe conventions and protocols, with ratification
pending of the remaining seven conventions to which the Republic of Serbia is a signatory party. The Republic of Serbia will continue to actively cooperate with each of these international organizations in the framework of UN Security Council Resolution (UN SCR) 1244 with the aim of promoting security, stability, democratic values and human rights for all of its citizens.

1.2. INTERNAL POLICY AND ECONOMIC REFORMS

1.2.1. Human Rights

The Republic of Serbia remains committed to respecting and protecting human rights enshrined in its Constitution and fundamental laws. Important areas include gender equality, enhancing multicultural dialogue, strengthening anti-discrimination measures, enhancing the status of socially vulnerable groups (particularly children, women, disabled, LGBT population and elderly persons), protecting ethnic minorities and communities, increasing the inclusion of the Roma population and reducing poverty.

1.2.2. Rule of Law

The Republic of Serbia will continue with overarching reforms in order to ensure the rule of law and respect for international standards.

Measures will strengthen the independence, transparency, accountability and efficiency of the judiciary. These will include implementation of a new Judicial Reform Strategy adopted in July 2013 and its accompanying Action Plan; consolidation of the responsible judicial institutions; expert training, and reform of the system of penal sanctions enforcement. The Law on Notaries Public and the Law on Enforcement and Security introduced the new judicial professions into the legal system: such as notary public and bailiffs. This legislation will reduce the number of overdue cases and increase the efficiency of the justice administration system.

The fight against corruption and organized crime will be particularly enhanced. The fight against corruption is a governmental priority into which significant political and institutional efforts are being invested. These efforts will be supported by capacity building and international cooperation with actors such as Council of Europe’s Group of States against Corruption (GRECO). The new Anti-Corruption Strategy adopted in July 2013 and its accompanying Action Plan will be fully implemented. The effectiveness of the institutions fighting organized crime will be increased through additional training and capacity building. Measures to combat trafficking in human beings will be strengthened and international cooperation pursued.

1.2.3. Emerging Security Challenges: the Fight against Terrorism, Arms Control and Cyber-Defence

The Republic of Serbia is keenly aware of the evolving nature of the security environment and the challenges it contains.
Terrorism is one of the biggest threats today and the Republic of Serbia attaches the greatest importance to national measures and international cooperation in the fight against terrorism. Priorities in this area include a full commitment to international obligations; strengthening and deepening international cooperation (with a focus on Regional and cross-border cooperation); strengthening of national bodies in charge of counter-terrorism; and participation in multinational operations.

The Republic of Serbia will continue to respect and comply with the commitments stemming from international treaties and conventions in the field of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and arms control, including UN SCR 1540 and 1810, the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Biological/Bacteriological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), etc. The Republic of Serbia is in a process of updating its legislation in the area of foreign trade in controlled goods, with the aim of becoming a full member of the Wassenaar Arrangement. In April 2013 the Republic of Serbia became the member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). Likewise, activities will continue to ratify the Additional Protocol to the Safeguards Agreement, signed with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The Republic of Serbia attaches importance to Regional cooperation in promoting strict rules and controls in the field of export and import of arms, military equipment and dual-use goods, including relevant technologies.

The Republic of Serbia has ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Cyber-Crime. The Republic of Serbia wishes to enhance its capabilities for protecting critical communication and information systems against cyber attacks. Government-level mechanisms and a coordination structure for cyber-defense need to be established.

1.2.4. Economic Reforms

Main economic priorities of the Republic of Serbia are to maintain macroeconomic stability; promote dynamic economic growth; sustain price stability and to increase employment and living standards in function of its social policy, in particular through accelerated implementation of economic reforms and attracting foreign investment. The process of privatization needs to be finalized. Negotiations on World Trade Organization (WTO) membership continue, alongside the Republic of Serbia’s integration in EU and global markets. Reforms and liberalization of markets for goods and services, especially financial services, continue.

The Republic of Serbia is committed to ensuring a stable and secure energy supply and to Regional and international cooperation. In this respect, the Republic of Serbia is particularly engaged with the EU and determined to contribute to Regional energy links. The Republic of Serbia is a Regional center at the crossroads of strategic energy and transport routes (Corridor 10 and the South Stream Project), and is open to participation in projects and plans aimed at diversification of supply and strengthening of energy security.
1.2.5. Enhancing Democratic Control of the Armed Forces.

The Republic of Serbia will continue to ensure and enhance the democratic control of its Armed Forces, making full use of the tools available in the PfP framework and of cooperation with other international organizations and partners.

II. DEFENCE AND MILITARY ISSUES

2.1. Defence Policy

The Republic of Serbia is focused on creating conditions for the development of an efficient defense system, maintenance of peace, a favorable security environment, cooperation with European and other international security structures and its participation in the Partnership for Peace program. The Republic of Serbia is committed to engage its military forces in multinational operations, which requires transformation of the defense system into a modern, efficient and internationally interoperable system.

2.2. Defence reform frameworks

The Republic of Serbia is committed to develop, through the reform process, an efficient and economically viable defense system, a modern, professional and efficient army, new capabilities in line with the missions and tasks, transparency and openness of defense, and the establishment of appropriate civil-military relations. The Republic of Serbia will be guided by its strategic and doctrinal documents when pursuing these goals.

The Republic of Serbia will continue its efforts to optimize the organizational structures of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the Serbian Armed Forces (SAF) in order to ensure compliance with the standards and organizational structures that enable them to work in an optimal way. Special importance is attached to the mutual cooperation under the auspices of the Defence Reform Group (DRG).

2.3. Defence planning

In the area of defense planning, which includes planning the development of the defense system and planning the use of defense forces, the Republic of Serbia will focus attention on implementing the approved Long-Term Defence System Development Plan, the Strategic Defence Review of the Republic of Serbia, the Medium-Term Plan and Program for the Development of the Defence system and on the realization of Partnership goals in the framework of the Planning and Review Process (PARP).

2.4. Interoperability issues and participation in multinational operations

The Republic of Serbia is committed to the development of interoperability and capabilities of the forces potentially available for participation in UN mandated multinational operations and EU crisis management operations.
The Republic of Serbia will make full use of the range of tools available in the PfP framework to increase the interoperability of its forces. The Republic of Serbia will also enhance the education, training and exercises provided to its personnel.

The Republic of Serbia’s participation in UN mandated and EU-led operations are a clear indication of its commitment to contributing to the promotion and maintenance of peace and security. The Republic of Serbia established CBRN Regional Centre for national and Regional purposes as well as for multinational cooperation with PfP, NATO, UN and Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) countries.

2.5. Defence Economics

Modernization of the Serbian Armed Forces units is of particular significance for the Republic of Serbia and it has set out priorities and procedures for achieving this.

The Republic of Serbia is interested in exploring possibilities for enhanced trade and international cooperation in the field of defense equipment.

III. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY, SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION, CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND EMERGENCY PLANNING SYSTEM

3.1. Public Information Strategy

Given the geographical position in the center of South East Europe and the nature of the security challenges faced in the Region the Republic of Serbia will pay special attention to the promotion and raising of public awareness on the importance of international and Regional cooperation in meeting such challenges.

The Republic of Serbia intends to conduct an active and comprehensive information campaign concerning the most important issues in defense sector reforms and on the nature, scope and benefits of cooperation with NATO within the PfP framework, including IPAP.

The Public Information Strategy will ensure that information about Serbia – NATO relations and cooperation are presented objectively and in a timely manner. It will be drafted by representatives of relevant ministries and institutions, and will include activities ensuring the provision of information to the printed and electronic media; the organization of panel discussions and round tables; support to academic and research institutions; as well as cooperation with non-governmental organizations.

The Strategy will encourage Serbian academic, research and scientific institutions to enter the process of cooperation with NATO and to undertake joint projects. Support from NATO Public Diplomacy Division will be of importance for the successful implementation of this Strategy, as well as the cooperation and support of NATO’s Contact Point Embassy, the NATO MLO in Belgrade and NATO Allies and partners.

3.2. Contribution to security through scientific cooperation
The Strategy of Scientific and Technological Development 2010-2015 envisions the Republic of Serbia as an innovative country. For the purpose of achieving national priorities as defined in the Strategy, the Republic of Serbia remains committed to increased participation in European and other international projects and programs. Serbian institutions already participate in more than 300 projects within the EU’s Seventh Framework Program (FP7).

The Republic of Serbia will work to strengthen cooperation with the NATO Science for Peace and Security (SPS) program through the creation of a more favorable legal and institutional environment to facilitate the participation in projects of experts and organizations from the Republic of Serbia, as well as to promote bilateral cooperation with the countries of the Region in the field of science and education.

3.3. Crisis management system and emergency planning

Given the threat posed by various natural hazards to the South-East Europe Region, a priority for the Republic of Serbia is to further strengthen its crisis management capabilities and services for reducing risk; improving rapid initial response in emergency situations; and effective consequence management. As regards emergency situations and crisis management, the Republic of Serbia will continue to promote cooperation with all neighboring countries and to actively participate in Regional and international initiatives. Priorities include: further strengthening the capacities of institutions and bodies dealing with emergency planning; implementing Plan for National Strategy for protection and rescue in emergencies and relevant by-laws; preparation of vulnerability risk assessment and Protection and Rescue plan at various levels; promotion of inter-departmental cooperation, equipping of special units and achievement of their full operability; as well as cooperation with the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC) and with NATO and PfP countries.

IV. PROTECTION OF CLASSIFIED INFORMATION


The Republic of Serbia will strengthen the capacity of the Office of the Council for National Security and Protection of Classified Information through adoption of the necessary by-laws and regulations, achieving its full capacity and implementing relevant standards. The system for the protection of foreign classified information will be unified, paying special attention to the system of registries used for NATO and EU classified information, while working on further developing and modernizing the classified information protection system. Regional cooperation will be enhanced by concluding bilateral agreements.
The Republic of Serbia recognizes the increasing importance of the protection of critical communication infrastructure and information systems against possible cyber-attacks and will pay special attention to this issue. (Also see section 1.2.3) In the INFOSEC area, high priority will be given to the establishment of subsidiary bodies to the National Security Authority (NSA): namely a Security Accreditation Authority (SAA), National Communication Security Authority (NCSA) and a National Distribution Authority (NDA).244

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244 Ibid.