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Kirk Mildner

The Western Balkans in the Grasp of the Financial Crisis

Until summer 2008 the Western Balkans as in the case of most emerging markets, were hardly touched by the financial crisis. High economic growth, booming housing as well as credit markets but also rising economic imbalances were dominating the economies of the Western Balkans.

However, in autumn 2008, banks and currencies came under strain. The last months of the year witnessed a rapid decline of industrial production and investment. The period of high growth, which had lasted eight years in the region, thus came to an abrupt end.

2009 will see much lower growth, less investment and painful economic adjustment. Recovery is likely to commence only in 2010.

Andreas Wittkowsky

Squaring the Circle: A Short History of UNMIK's European Union Pillar, 1999-2008

UNMIK's European Union Pillar, which was in operation from 1999-2008, provided a unique EU contribution to a United Nations' peace-building effort. In addition to promoting reconstruction and economic development in Kosovo, the Pillar also had a mandate to build and transfer economic institutions in a way conducive to maintaining peace and stability.

Based on the Pillar's achievements, Kosovo's development debate is now able to focus on such questions as where to build competitive advantage, and how to improve on its institutions.

The Pillar's experience also provides additional lessons on setting reasonable expectations for economic policy in a post-conflict environment, the trade-off between economic efficiency and political stability, the limits of an early "ownership" approach to development and the pitfalls of institutional handover.

Johanna Deimel / Armando García Schmidt

'It's still the status, stupid!' – Corner-stones for a New Policy of Responsibility in Kosovo

The status of Kosovo continues to be controversial. Prishtina and Belgrade are now even more at loggerheads than they were before the Kosovar Declaration of Independence in February 2008. Diverging interests in the EU and the United Nations have paralyzed the work of the international community.

The authors demonstrate that the new state is already embroiled in a fundamental crisis. The country's sovereignty hangs in the balance. Neither the EU nor the international community can agree on what should happen next. The authors focus on the role and the significance of the international and European actors on the ground.

For example, it is becoming clear that the EU's legal mission EULEX has a growing credibility problem. And thus once again the efficacy of the whole of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy is being called into question. It is asserted that the EU needs a new policy with which to create stability and make for clarity. Prishtina must show some responsibility if it does not wish to jeopardize the future of Kosovo.

Sabine Willenberg

Regional Reconciliation and Stabilization via Law?

Current Claiming of the International Court of Justice in the post-Yugoslav Region

The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia ICTY and the International Court of Justice ICJ, the two most prominent international courts dealing with the post-Yugoslav states, both based in The Hague, address open questions left to the Yugoslav successors by the past of World War II, Tito-Yugoslavia and its disintegration and the wars of the 1990s.

Only ICTY was given a mandate to contribute to coming to terms with the past by bringing the war crimes committed in the 1990s to court. Nevertheless, ICJ more and more often appears when it comes to judging open questions of the past: The Yugoslav successors discovered the ICJ for their concerns, reinvented its function and compete with lawsuits – for genocide, borders, names or Kosovo's independence.

The article follows the question whether international jurisdiction and the extensive claiming of the ICJ by the Yugoslav successors contribute to a constructive dealing with the past and reconciliation in the region. It argues that juridical coming to terms with the past can only be effective when being interconnected with the societal dimension, where awareness of injustice must be reached and communicated. Otherwise, international justice runs the risk of degenerating into mere, but striking foreign policy instruments and even intensifying the conflict.

Anneli Ute Gabanyi

Romania's Parliamentary Elections in 2008

On 30 November 2008, for the first time since Romania has joined the EU, parliamentary elections were held. Due to the prolonged political strife between the minority government of Prime Minister Calin Popescu Tariceanu and President Traian Basescu and also to new constitutional and legal regulations, the interest of

the voters in taking part in the electoral process dropped to 39 %. The outcome of the elections was rather inconclusive, with the Social Democratic Party scoring a tiny majority of votes and the Democratic Liberal Party clutching a small majority of the seats in both houses of parliament. Tariceanu's National Liberal Party scored around 20 %, the Hungarian Democratic Union over 6 % of the votes. The new government was formed by the Prime Minister appointed by President Basescu, Democratic Liberal Party leader Emil Boc. It is made up of his own party and the Social Democratic Party of Mircea Geoana who was appointed head of Senate. Both the procedures used in forming the government and the subsequent tensions that arose inside the two governing parties and between them seem to confirm predictions that this government will not outlast the presidential elections scheduled for the end of 2009.

<p>Christiane Schlötzer-Scotland The Greek Anger Causes and Consequences of the Protests and Violence</p>
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The mass explosion of youth anger in Greece following the killing of the 15 year old Alexandros Grigoropoulos by police on 6 December 2008 was due to deeper feelings of frustration. Greek political and economic life has been overshadowed in the recent years by blatant scandals of corruption, including almost all stratas of state and society, and even worse, the perpetrators enjoyed almost complete impunity.

This caused a sense of powerlessness in the society, which leads to a broader sympathy for the protesting youth. But the movement has no specific goals, and the mixture of underlying causes is diffuse. Therefore it is likely that this movement will not lead to a real move. Since the Greek political parties have no relation to the new and young forces in society, they might not be eager to channel the frustration into political change.

But Greece could be only an early example of outbursts of violent youth protests in Europe, especially when the financial crisis takes its toll.