

Abstracts

Bernd Christoph Ströhm

Between EU Integration and Brain Drain – Croatia’s Challenges and New Opportunities in Light of the Euro Adoption and Schengen Area Accession

Croatia’s path towards EU integration can be regarded as a success story in the Balkans, following the country’s independence which was finalised in 1995 after a bloody four-year war. Since the year 2000, Croatia has undergone a remarkable reform process, stimulated by the conditions for accession to the EU. With Croatia’s EU Schengen area accession and introduction of the euro, both in January 2023, the country managed to fully integrate into the EU – only 10 years after its EU membership. Nevertheless, the country still faces a multitude of issues, such as the proper diversification of its economy and a declining population rate. This paper shall outline and analyse opportunities and challenges, stemming from Croatia’s new currency regime, Schengen area accession and brain drain. It will also explore the country’s new role as an “energy hub” for the Western Balkan region and the EU, following Russia’s military invasion of Ukraine.

Michael Martens

Citissime at Night – German Foreign Policy and the Dissolution of Yugoslavia 1991

Even after more than three decades, the legend persists that Germany initiated or even caused the dissolution of Yugoslavia through the “premature” or “hasty” recognition of Slovenia and Croatia in 1991. Some even claim Germany thus triggered the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, insinuating it would not have occurred had Slovenia and Croatia not been recognized. While a more differentiated picture evolved in recent years, the legend lives on. However, friends and foes of “German-bashing” so far had one thing in common: They could not base their opinion on a crucial source, namely the political archive of the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin, as the respective documents were classified until 2022. Based on the material now available, this essay analyzes how, when and why Bonn changed course in 1991. Initially being a staunch supporter of the preservation of Yugoslavia, it became the leading proponent of Slovenian and Croatian independence by the end of the year. At the same time the German government was the driving force behind extensive legislation for the protection of the Serb minority in Croatia.

Jens Bastian

Abandonment, Reversal or Continuity? Turkey ahead of Landmark Elections

Countries in Southeast Europe face a host of elections in 2023. Among the states calling their electorate to the ballot box is Turkey where presidential and parliamentary elections must be held by June 2023. After two decades in office, first as prime minister and subsequently as president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is seeking an unprecedented five-year term at the helm of the country. The magnitude of socio-economic challenges which large swaths of the population face make his re-election prospects uncertain. Moreover, he is being confronted by a new six-party opposition alliance that is counting on the growing disaffection towards Erdoğan. The outcome of the elections will be transformative, one way or the other, both for Turkey as well as for Southeast Europe.

Marina Vulović

The Brussels Dialogue – Gaining New Momentum, but Still Hindered by Tensions between Serbia and Kosovo

Tensions between Serbia and Kosovo increased in late 2022, with Serbs from North Kosovo setting up roadblocks and withdrawing from Kosovo institutions. These developments jeopardize the progress made in the Brussels Dialogue, mediated by the EU since 2011 as a way of normalizing relations between Belgrade and Prishtina. Though being far from a comprehensive normalization agreement, the two parties have been negotiating amidst tensions on a new European proposal for normalizing their relations. This analysis argues that the main reason for repeated tensions between Belgrade and Prishtina is the differing understanding of Kosovo's identity by the two sides: as an independent state or as part of Serbia. The analysis starts with the background of and reasons behind the recent crisis and delves deeper into the contents of the EU-proposal. It also examines the effects that the adoption of the new proposal could have on political relations in the Balkans and between the Balkans and the EU.

Tomáš Košek

The Czech EU Presidency and the Western Balkans Agenda

The article deals with the specifics of the Czech EU presidency in relation to the Western Balkans. Its introductory part explains the impacts of the Russo-Ukrainian war on the region and describes its influence on the transformation of the EU's foreign policy agenda. The central part focuses on the structural aspects of the presidency, the key objectives, and their subsequent application to the Western Balkan region. Attention is also paid to the development of accession negotiations. Finally, the article concludes with an evaluation of the presidency, which is expanded upon by national and international responses.

Adamantios Theodor Skordos

The Congress of Berlin (1878) – A Southeast-European Milestone in the Modern History of International Law

The article reflects on the significance of the Congress of Berlin in 1878 for the development of international law. As a result of the efforts to reduce the potential for conflicts in Southeastern Europe, a number of international law innovations were initiated. For the first time, the recognition of a new state was subject to preconditions. This conditionality did not refer to existing or absent state characteristics (e. g. territory, people, state authority), as it does today, but concerned the guarantee and protection of minority rights. In direct relation to this conditionality, the Ottoman Empire and the newly founded states of Serbia and Romania as well as territorially enlarged sovereign nation states in Southeastern Europe (e. g. Greece) committed themselves to innovative minority protection regulations. Finally, the Russian war declaration against the Ottoman Empire sparked international law debates on the right to intervene on the basis of (what some critics called) “allegedly” humanitarian grounds.

Christian Voß

Religious Boundaries and Transnationalism in Recent Literature from Southeast Europe

Literary works written by refugees from the Yugoslav secession wars of the 1990s perfectly fit the criteria of post-colonial and transnational literature: Oscillating between their new homes in the West and their homeland in the Balkans, they typically write semi-fiction about their hybrid identities. They tell us stories about alienation and loneliness both in the country of origin (patriarchate, misogyny, homophobia) and the host country (racism, discrimination) and personalize the “third space” paradigm and transcultural “inbetweenness”. The article presents novels of the two Bulgarian diaspora writers Kapka Kassabova and Miroslav Penkov, the Finnish-Kosovar writer Pajtim Statovci and the Bosnian authors Aleksandar Hemon and Bekim Sejranović. The focus is on the representation of cultural and religious differences, challenging the pejorative perception of Islam and the Ottoman legacy in the mainstream discourse in most Balkan countries.

