

IN THIS ISSUE:

- AIIS hosts the second bilateral forum of the Joint Centre for Albania-Serbia Relations in Tirana. Read more about it on "Highlight", pages 1-2.
- The challenge of radicalism and violent extremism in the Western Balkans is the main focus of the Security Seminars for young professionals and students. Read more about it on "Our Events", page 3.
- Conference on Geopolitics brings together local and international experts to discuss on the return of the geopolitics in the Balkans as well as on a global level. Read more about it on "Our Events", page 6
- Meet Monika Marić, the third Serbian fellow of the Joint Centre for Albania-Serbia Relations. Read more about her on "Welcome on board", page 5

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AIIS Newsletter

November 2017

Highlight

Joint Centre for Albania Serbia-Relations

Tirana Forum

The Albanian Institute for International Studies together with the Forum for International Relations of the European Movement in Serbia, with support from the Federal Republic of Germany organized the Tirana Forum, an interactive 2 days event with speakers and participants from various walks of life.

Organized in Albania for the second year in a row, the forum of the Joint Centre for Albania-Serbia Relations aims to increase the communication, knowledge and interaction between actors in both countries, Albania and Serbia, which are influential in politics, economic policy making, media, arts, culture, youth activism, etc. with the final intend impact of building networks and working partnerships.

Albert Rakipi, Executive Director of the Albanian Institute for International Studies regarded the Joint Centre as a very important project, whose mission is to build strategic relations between the two countries. His Serbian counterpart, Jelica Minić said that through this centre we have opened an avenue of cooperation. Gordana Čomić, Deputy Speaker of the



Parliament of Serbia, talked about the role of women in the interstate cooperation in the region. She talked about a common agenda for women in the region. Women are victims of violence, they are less respected, less participating in politics. She said that politicians in Serbia are afraid to say that they want peace with Albanians, they may lose votes. They are afraid they will be hated. Mimi Kodheli,

Albanian MP, said that Kosovo should be a bridge between Albanians and Serbs, not a wall. The problems between the two countries should be resolved by themselves. Kodheli sees Albania and Serbia as the backbone of the region and if the backbone is weak, the whole region will suffer.

(Continued on page 2)

Tirana Forum

(Continued from page 1)

Serbia-Albania: Culture, youth, joint projects

This year's forum kicked off with a discussion panel in the field of culture (literature, arts, education and relevant projects). Writers, as the renowned Mrs. Diana Culi, diplomats such as Mr. Ylljet Alicka, artists and researchers contributed to the discussion. Monika Maric, a research fellow doing her exchange at AIIS as part of the activities of the Joint Centre for Albania Serbia relations presented the key findings of her research work in the form of an overview of cultural relations at the current stage and potential for the future. Persida Asllani, the Director of the Albanian National Library and former teacher of Albanian in Belgrade emphasized the importance of translation networks such as 'Europeana' and 'Tradukui' through which literature exchange is made possible, since, like Culi stated, it is important for Albanians and Serbians to know and eventually like each other's literature as a way to knowing each other.

Building strategic relations: taking stock and future challenges, EU integration

In this panel, distinguished speakers included Arta Dade, former head of the Parliamentary Commission on Foreign Affairs, Duško Lopandić, former ambassador, Klajda Gjoshja, until recently Minister of European Integration of Albania, Eralda Çani, former deputy minister of EU integration, Jelica Minić, Marko Bello, former minister of Integration and MP, Piro Misha, executive Director of the Institute for Dialogue and Communication (IDK), Geron Kamberi, director of AKSHI (state agency for education, science and innovation) who touched upon political relations. Bilateral relations were also discussed in the context of the European integration process, in times when the EU itself is facing challenges, with euro-skepticism on the rise and pessimism for Brexit. The Berlin process is contributing to reconciliation on regional relations, but it is merely a side policy and the normalization of relations between Albania and Serbia should be based on realism. Although the speakers agreed that youth exchanges have increased, civil society has a duty to do more about the younger generations, since there still exist deep-rooted prejudices and fear between the two peoples.



Serbia-Albania: Centrality of economics

Gordana Plamenac, President of the Board of the Danube Competence Center, talked about agreement between Serbia and Albania which is an important platform for further research, development and ultimate cooperation. Also she mentioned that in the field of tourism is so much to be offered, at both sides and that this should be worked at the different level – multilateral cooperation and within the international organizations. Sanja Nikolin, Private entrepreneur, said that she believes that cooperation starts at home and that we have so many things we need to do at home before reaching out toward others. She talked about small medium size businesses in Serbia from which 88 percent are micro-companies and believes that Albania is also having the same situation. Aleksandar Simurdic talked about their proposal for the Berlin process is to have the, for the first time in Summit in London next year, ministers

of education and to see how to have the institutional cooperation in the field of education.

Serbia-Albania: Role of media

Branko Cecen, Director of the Center for Investigative Journalism of Serbia and Lufti Dervishi, Albanian media expert talked about the problems of local medias in their respective countries. Cecen described Serbian media as socially dysfunctional, under strict control and mostly dependent. Whereas Dervishi mentioned the lack of professionalism in Albania, shrinking space of the traditional media, more authoritarian influence from the government. Discussing bilateral coverage, it was emphasized that in media reporting the biggest attention drawn Kosovo and meetings between Rama and Vucic. Although Serbians read about Albania in English, and vice-versa through regional agencies like BIRN, the problem is that not a lot of people read in English. Unfortunately, very few news from Albania filter to Serbia, without the often propagandistic main stream government press.



Security issues seminars

Facing the challenge of radicalism and violent extremism in the Western Balkans

During 27-29 September 2017 the Albanian Institute for International Studies, supported by the NATO Public Diplomacy Division, organized a series of seminars in the form of a short security studies school for a variety of participants such as students and young professionals in the security field. Eight lecturers from the fields of diplomacy, public administration and experts from NGOs took part in this event, which gathered about 30 students of international relations, security studies and law, as well as young professionals.

Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy in Tirana and security issues expert, Mr David Muniz, explained during the first lecture that NATO is a top priority for the US government towards Europe and clarified the position of President Trump who has made very clear that NATO is a strong alliance. Although, Muniz added, there is a growing set of challenges that the alliance has to face. For the future missions of the Albanian army he suggested better capacities for intervention in disaster management such as flooding. Zhidas Daskalovski, professor of security studies in University of Skopje and part of the Center for Research and Policy Making in Macedonia during his lecture, discussed about NATO, Macedonia-Albania relations, the influence of Russia, the threat and potential of Islamic radicalism, energy security, as well as intelligence agencies in Macedonia. Regarding radicalization, he said that 150 persons from Macedonia have gone to Syria and commented that this is a big number for a small country.

Lulzim Peci, former ambassador and current Executive Director of KIPRED in Kosovo told participants about the penetration of Wahabi ideology from various organizations from Saudi Arabia and Qatar that were let in often under charity premises. In Kosovo the number of participants in the conflict is more than 300, out of which ten percent children. 64 are numbered as



killed. 134 are still in Syria. More than 140 are arrested for terrorism charges and the law is much more severe now. Despite the importance of other factors, ideological ones are key and decisive.

Arben Ramkaj, a local imam from Elbasan and head of the Interfaith Communication and Collaboration Center spoke about the global problem and the efforts to prevent violent extremism in Albania. He mentioned five key pillars of work that prove successful such as 1. Improving capacities and education of clerics 2. Youth needs instructions and guidance. 3. Working with women and mothers who often are under the pressure of males. 4. Work with religious communities in order to promote dialogue 5 -Media- the need to communicate properly with the general public.

Rozana Baci from the Office of the National Coordinator against violent extremism informed the participants there was a total of 158 Albanians that joined the conflict in Syria, about 21 killed while about 80 still remain there. Most of them are from central Albania's regions. Some have been promised salaries to fight. From 2016 the going has stopped since the law changed but also ISIS has lost its power. As factors and venues of indoctrination she mentioned two of them: online recruiting and radicalization in prisons.

Arjan Dyrmishi, a very well-known security expert and now part of the cabinet of the Minister for Diaspora of Albania, focused on some theoretical

definitions about security. He talked at length to students about security being the result of the combination of several external and internal factors, including social and economic indicators, society's homogeneity, security institutions, neighborly relations, regional environment etc.

Arian Starova, President of the Atlantic Council of Albania and former minister stressed the big difference that has happened in the Balkans in terms of security and the very low risk that exists now in terms of conflict and war. He described the situation in Serbia in relation to Kosovo but also in Macedonia with the political crisis that ended there and the new government that was formed.

Dr. Rakipi focused on weak states as a key common denominator for describing crime as a threat and also described the two major theories for conflict generation: the grand theory of economic and geopolitical interest as well as the other more novel one focusing on incidents and misunderstanding as the source of major developments. Rakipi spoke at length about the return of geopolitics and its importance for regions which have traditionally been conflict-prone or proxy battle-places for the calculations of major global players. For the region Rakipi focused on transnational crime which contrary to public ethnic frictions does not care about ethnic or linguistic divisions when co-operating.

Energy policy as a factor of power and economic growth: power projections



A joint event of the Albanian Institute for International Studies and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, the conference, organized on October 25 gathered national and international experts on energy policy. The increasingly unstable global political situation and frequent disagreements arising among countries, might lead to a European/global energy crisis, Dr. Rakipi said in his opening remarks, a possibility which makes Albania's initiative of an energy project a strategic investment of great importance for the country and for the region alike. Dr. Frank Radke, publisher and Editor in Chief of Energlobe, spoke at length of the importance energy sources have in our lives and in the power of nations. He placed a great importance on the new alliances and frictions created in the shifting energy power

dynamics – the increasing power the USA and China are gaining and the possibility of replacing Saudi Arabia and Turkey in the powerful energetic trio that is now made up by Turkey, Russia and Saudi Arabia. Matthias Dornfeldt, Assistant Professor of energy policies and diplomacies spoke of the security assurance and stability energy policies provide, as many agreements between states have been achieved through energy plans and investments. He noted how relationships between Russia and Germany, despite historical disagreements, have been established based on trade ties, on the agreement that Germany will be provided Russian gas, as long as it provides Russia the equipment. Dr. Ledion Krisafi, AIIS researcher spoke of the Russian domination in the Western Balkans, as the

“Renewable energy sources are a safe future investment, which is why we first need to focus on taking soft measures and following European practices, being energy efficient and following rules in building, constructing and wasting energy.” - Gjergji Simaku

biggest seller of gas and oil. An exception to the rule here are Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro, whose inexistent gas infrastructure has kept them out of Russia's radar. Dr. Krisafi explained the importance of the energetic projects of the Western Balkans in two prisms: to develop the country and the region alike, and to minimize Russian influence in the region and the EU. Dr. Gjergji Simaku, Director of Renewable Energy Sources and Energetic Efficiency stressed the importance of connectivity among the countries of the West Balkans, in order to enable the transmission of good, knowledge, and necessary technologies

“Geopolitics is the political inquiry of the earth, whereas geo-economics was born from the continuous chance of economics and politics. Borders are increasingly losing their power, and even though territorial conflicts still exist, wars are kept at bay. In this context, geopolitics has turned to geo-economics, as the latter focuses on competition, not the ‘friend-enemy’ concept of geopolitics.” - Dr. Wulf Lapins

Serbia and the bilateral Albania-Serbia relations in the eyes of the printed media

During the AIIS conference on the role of the media in informing and shaping opinion concerning the Albania-Serbia relations, research was presented comparing the monitoring of printed media in both Albania and Serbia.

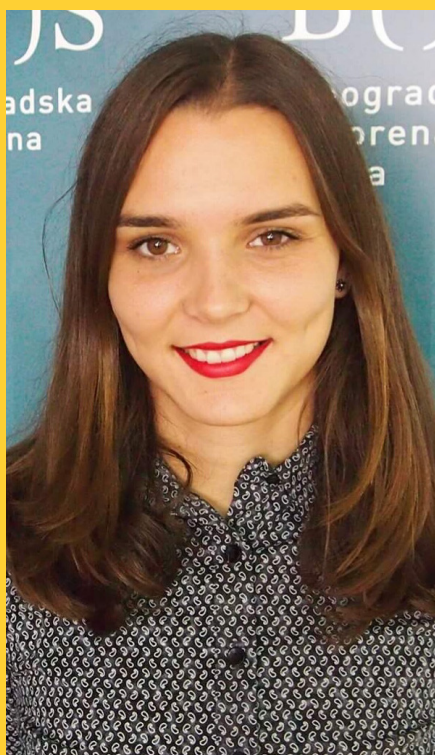
The research presented by Dr. Ledion Krisafi focused on Albanian printed media over the course of the year's first six months. Out of 131 articles analyzed in the study, it was noticed that relations were positively mentioned in regards to cultural and economic cooperation, while the issue of Serbia's ex-province Kosovo, which is now an independent country, turns comments bitter and negative. In addition, Krisafi mentioned that Serbian media cover more of Albanian tourism during the summer, whereas this is not noticed in Albanian media. When it comes to the selected newspapers, researched by former exchange fellow at AIIS, Aleksander Pavlovic, a distinction could be noticed between commercially



oriented and quality content newspapers in Serbia in regards of the language they use in describing Albania-Serbia relations and supporting political and social stereotypes. The overall number of articles mentioning Albania during

the six month timeframe was 855, of which 385 belonged to one newspaper alone. Pavlovic emphasized that while around 70 per cent of the articles had a neutral tone, 184 of them had a derogatory tone and in 152 of those cases, the articles focused on Kosovo.

WELCOME ON BOARD



Monika Maric was born in Sremska Mitrovica, where she finished high school socio-linguistic course in Gymnasium. She graduated in September 2016. At the Faculty of Philology, course Albanian language, literature and culture. She currently studies on the master of Culture in a dialogue. She participated at numerous international seminars in the field of language, culture and politics. As for the non-formal education, she attended the one-year studies at Belgrade Open School called "Future studies". She speaks Albanian and English. She worked from

August until the end of October 2017 as a third fellow of the Centre for Albania-Serbia Relations at the Albanian Institute for International Studies (AIIS) in Tirana. She researched in the field of cultural collaboration between Serbia and Albania and what can be done to use the potential in the future. "It was a great experience for me, where I learned something new in the everyday work of the institute, made new friends-colleagues, but also had the opportunity to get to know Albania, their everyday life, culture, and young people."

Conference on Geopolitics



On November 16, 2017 the Albanian Institute for International Studies (AIIS) and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Tirana held a national conference on geopolitics. The event aimed at discussing the recent debates, trends and challenges regarding geopolitics, the implications for the Balkans as well as related issues such as energy, role of third actors, etc.

Upon providing the participants with a general overview, **Dipl.-Pol. Jörg-Dietrich Nackmayrdo**, said that geopolitical analysis can be meaningful only when we take into consideration power-transforming factors. Discoveries of modern age warfare may become game changers, as well as the establishment of mega-cities in the 21st century. Nackmayrdo concluded his speech by stating that spatial thinking during the 21st century needs to go beyond geographic boundaries and although slight geographic changes occur very slowly, the development of technology in an incredibly fast pace during these last decades, has brought new forms of human interaction and it is now clear that whoever is in control of artificial intelligence, controls the world.

Prof. Dr. Udo Steinbach in his presentation focused on the dramatic shift of the Turkish foreign policy from one that was based in the Kemalist paradigm therefore shunning away from any interventionism to one that celebrated the Ottoman past and sought to re-establish links and influence in both the Balkans and the Arab world.

Andranik Aslanyan talked about the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, in a presentation entitled “Clashes of interest in geopolitics: case study of Karabakh”. He made a historical overview, focusing especially in the last years of the Soviet Union and later in the beginning of the 90s, when the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh turned violent. He

described the position of the main actors in the region: Russia, Turkey, Iran and USA. He said that the main difference between this conflict and the one in Kosovo is that the international community is more concerned about a conflict in Europe than one in the Caucasus.

In the second panel, **Remzi Lani**, expert on regional issues spoke on the hot topic of return of geopolitics as a field that seemed to have lost attention at least in the Balkans but has returned with a lot of vigor. He treated cases such as Russia and Turkey with the former access and use of media and social media to distribute propaganda and the latter religious and economic influence.

Dr. Ledion Krisafi spoke on the importance of energy projects and energy dependency in the geopolitical context, given that the energy security of Albania currently is highly vulnerable and it will be also in the future if the country continues to rely almost totally on hydropower and imported energy. Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) will change the geopolitical position of Albania concerning the energy because it will allow the country to become a hub for the entire Western Balkans and to take a prominent role in the competition between the EU and Russia for influence in the energy sector.

Dr. Enri Hide, professor of security and international studies at the European University of Tirana (UET) who has recently concluded a study on the role of third actors in Albania gave a very interesting presentation of some of the key findings about the role and perception of actors in Albania such as Russia, China, Turkey and the Gulf states. By using data collected about economy and investment as well as media monitoring Hide spoke about the rising presence of these third actors in Albania and their specific spheres where they seek influence.

Foreign Policy Forum

Talking Contemporary Japan in the international arena

The first Japanese Ambassador in Tirana, Makoto Ito, was the keynote speaker to the Foreign Policy Forum organized on November 9. Noting the current modest trade exchanges between the two countries and non-existent Japanese foreign direct investment in Albania, the ambassador said Japanese companies currently lack information on Albania and its business climate but there is growing interest as shown by a recent Japan business delegation visiting the country.

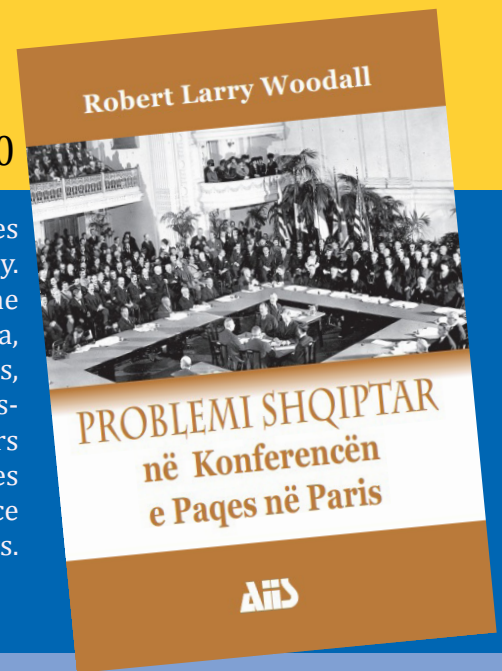
Ambassador Ito unveiled Japan's transformation from WWII devastation to economic miracle by interacting with the global economy and close ties with the U.S. and present-day threats posed by North Korea's nuclear tests. Japan's foreign policy agenda is based on further boosting its alliance with top partner U.S., strengthening its economic diplomacy and improving relations with neighbors, the latter being undermined by North Korea's hardline communist regime's repeated nuclear tests posing a threat to the Northeast Asia region.



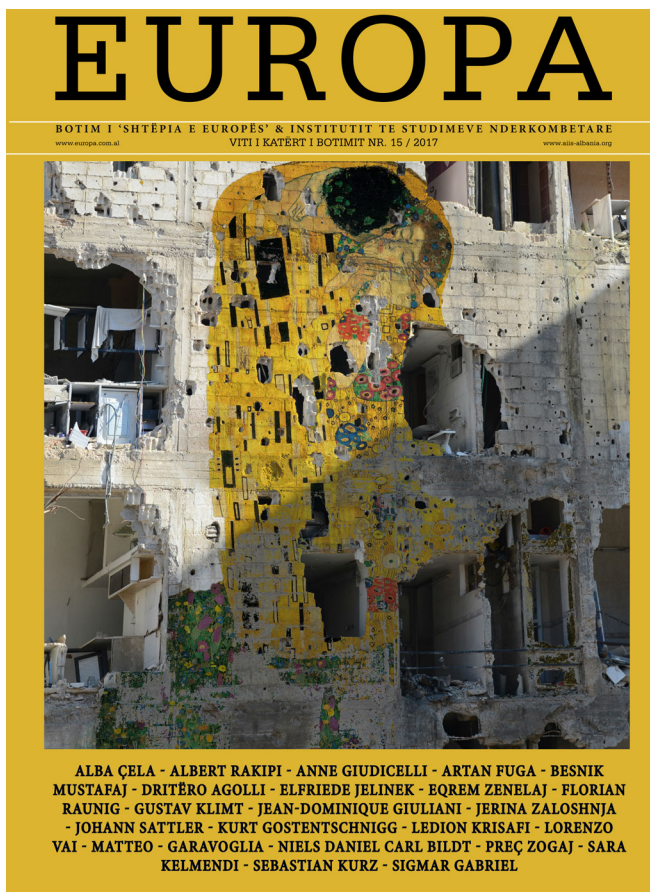
AIIS New Publications

The Albanian Problem during the Peacemaking 1919-1920

The most recent publication of the Albanian Institute for International Studies is a very interesting, very complete and important work for Albania's History. Robert Larry Woodall addresses in detail the Albanian problem during the Peace Conference in Paris and the attitude of other powers towards Albania, including Yugoslavia, Greece, Italy, France, Great Britain and the United States, the activity of the Greek and Albanian affairs committee, the United States-Britain Great Schemes of May 1919, as well as all the diplomatic maneuvers and plans for the decommissioning of Albania. This is a work that relies heavily on diplomatic archives from the United States, Great Britain, France and Italy and has a wide and unknown wealth of first-hand documents.



Our magazine *Europa* latest issue:



Featuring a superimposed picture of Gustav Klimt's painting "The Kiss" against the walls of a war-torn Syria building on its front cover, the *Europa* magazine, an Albanian language publication of the Albanian Institute for International Studies, has launched its latest issue with a special section dedicated to Austria, Albania's traditional ally since more than a century.

Speaking at the magazine's launching ceremony, the Austrian Ambassador to Albania Johann Sattler recalled how Austria-Albanian diplomatic relations date back to the 18th century, when Albania was still under Ottoman rule, with the opening of a consulate in Durrës in 1751.

On its fifteenth issue, the *Europa* magazine, offering a critical approach to developments in Albania, the region and the EU, also launched its europa.com.al new website.

Now in its fourth year of publication, the *Europa* magazine offers a critical approach to political, economic developments in Albania and the region, with a special focus on literature and arts and dedicating special sections to Albania's partners.

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