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The **Project on Ethnic Relations (PER)** was founded in 1991 in anticipation of the serious interethnic conflicts that were to erupt following the collapse of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. PER conducts programs of high-level intervention and dialogue and serves as a neutral mediator in several major disputes in the region. PER also conducts programs of training, education, and research at international, national, and community levels.

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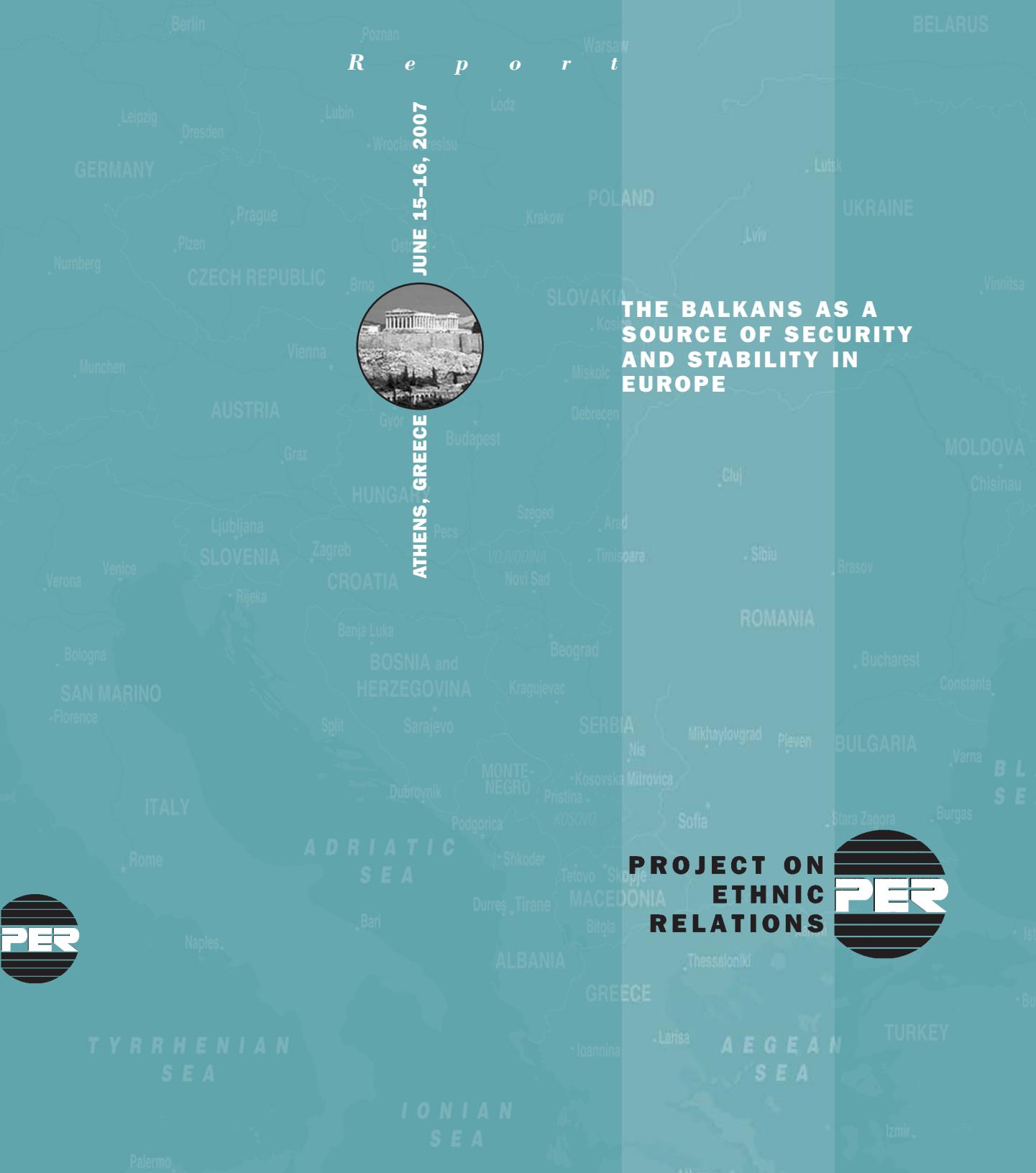Web Site: www.per-usa.org

Report

JUNE 15–16, 2007

ATHENS, GREECE

THE BALKANS AS A SOURCE OF SECURITY AND STABILITY IN EUROPE

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ETHNIC
RELATIONS PER

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PREFACE

The past decade has been a period of momentous change for countries and peoples in the Balkans. Some have newly acquired membership in the European Union, others remain in different stages of the candidacy process, but all are interested in strengthening regional peace and security, and creating foundations for self-sustaining democratic societies.

The resolution of Kosovo's status poses a major challenge to the stability of the Balkans. No matter how it is resolved, it will inevitably produce dissatisfied groups. Regional cooperation is crucial in preventing the reoccurrence of violence and strengthening interethnic cooperation. Regional cooperation is also vital to economic development, the key to the region's ultimate goal of integrating into Euro-Atlantic structures.

Major conflicts have ceased in the Balkans, yet they remain embodied in weak institutions, political infighting and parliamentary boycott. The fragility of the present balance is reflected in Serbia's January 2007 national elections, in which the Serbian Radical Party secured a plurality of the vote; the continuing distrust between Kosovo Albanians and Serbs; interruptions in interethnic dialogue in Macedonia; and persisting ethnic tension in South Serbia.

The need for consolidating regional cooperation and the timing of Kosovo's status prompted the Project on Ethnic Relations (PER), in cooperation with the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, and with the support of

From left to right: Michael Christides, Imer Selmani, Zoran Loncar, Gabriela Konevska Trajkovska, Dora Bakoyannis, Livia Plaks, Ranko Krivokapic, and Ardian Gjini.

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the US State Department through a USAID grant, to convene its ninth high-level Balkan regional roundtable in Athens on June 15-16, 2007. This roundtable was also supported by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. The discussion was titled "The Balkans as a Source of Security and Stability in Europe" and was intended to provide policymakers from the Balkans, the US, the European Union, the Council of Europe, and NATO with an opportunity to present and exchange their ideas and points of view concerning the region's current security situation. Our goal was to provide regional leaders with effective and coordinated strategies to accelerate internal and external integration of the region into European institutions.

PER is well known for being actively engaged in improving interstate and interethnic relations in the Balkans. We understand that this is not an easy task and may take time, as many countries have had to build their democratic institutions from the ground up. One of the major persisting challenges for these nascent democracies has been responding to minority demands while at the same time satisfying the will of the majority. Although a lot remains to be done in this regard, most countries have been able to strike satisfactory balances between majority and minority rights. PER hopes the discussions and the shared experiences among participants at this roundtable will contribute to balancing majority and minority rights in the region, advance the process of European integration, and bolster regional security.

We would like to express our deep gratitude to Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis, Ambassador Michael Christides, and their colleagues and staff for their support and assistance in organizing and hosting the meeting. PER's Regional Center for Central, East and Southeast Europe located in Bucharest, and our representatives in Belgrade and Pristina also played an invaluable role in putting this event together. Our thanks also go to PER staff in Princeton for their hard work in planning and organizing this event. We would also like to extend our sincerest appreciation to the US State Department and the US Agency for International Development for making the project possible.

We want to also take this opportunity to thank the participants in the meeting for their willingness to engage in frank and open discussions about difficult and often sensitive issues. Except as otherwise noted, participants' remarks are not attributed to specific individuals, and the

participants have not had the opportunity to review the text of this report, for which PER assumes full responsibility. We are grateful to Professor Steven Burg of Brandeis University, a member of the PER Council for Ethnic Accord, who is the principal author of this report, which incorporates additional comments provided by PER staff.

Livia B. Plaks, *President*

Alex N. Grigor'ev, *Executive Director*

Princeton, NJ
August 2007

Participants at the roundable.

From left to right: Oliver Ivanovic and Alex Rondos.

From left to right: Steven Burg, Alex Grigor'ev, and Adrian Severin.

NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

In this report, the spelling of the name "Kosovo" is used (rather than "Kosova," the spelling preferred by Albanians, or "Kosovo and Metohija" or "Kosmet" preferred by Serbs) because that is the spelling most commonly used in the English-speaking world. For the same reason, Serbian names of the places are used, for example, Pristina and not Prishtina. However, the spelling "Kosova" is used in the names of Kosovo Albanian political parties and organizations. The term "Kosovo" is used as an adjective for Kosovo's inhabitants, whether Albanians, Serbs, Roma, Turks, or others.

"Serb" is used as an ethnic term, whereas "Serbian" is employed when referring to Serbia.

From left to right: Riza Halimi, Ermelinda Meksi, Veton Surroi, Christopher Meuwly, Steven Schook, and Thomas Countryman.

From left to right: Dusan Spasojevic, Ivan Vejvoda, and Zarko Korac.

INTRODUCTION

In the spirit of the event's locale, the Greek Foreign Minister opened the meeting with the following metaphor: "Like Odysseus, the Balkans has embarked on its own path to Ithaca, the road to EU accession." While focusing on Southeast Europe and its progress towards closer political, social and economic stabilization, she referred to the foundations for co-operation and prosperity which have already been established. Two countries have already joined the European Union, and three are at the level of candidate status. Others have signed or are negotiating stabilization agreements with the EU, and regional dialogue and cooperation has advanced, with the upgraded Southeast European cooperation process and the emergence of new regional institutions. "But a great deal of work remains to be done," she cautioned. "The region is a constant 'work in progress,' with shaky internal institutions, problematic economic performance, and unresolved ethnic identity issues. The region requires

Like Odysseus the Balkans has embarked on its own path to Ithaca, the road to EU accession.

careful attention and is of high concern to Greece." According to the Foreign Minister, there is widespread support in Greece for the accession of regional states to the EU, as instability in any part of Southeast Europe can be destabilizing for all of Europe. "We want to see states that foster economic development, promote the rule of law, respect human rights, and build effective institutions in which all citizens, regardless of religion or ethnicity, can be confident. For many countries, the European perspective is an important impetus for changes and reforms, and Greece is committed to providing a credible European perspective for all the countries in the region."

Minister Bakoyannis pointed out that the accession of Romania and Bulgaria carries the message that countries which fulfill the requirements of membership do, in fact, become member states of the EU. The EU must maintain the credibility of the principle that full compliance equals full membership. At the same time, the Balkan economies must be improved, unemployment must be addressed, institutions must be built, capacity-building must be strengthened, and rule of law must be established. Partnership and cooperation are of the essence if the region is to be successful and efficient in this endeavor.

The Foreign Minister reported that Greece is providing both partnership and cooperation in this effort. Greek investments in the wider region, including Turkey, amount to approximately $18 billion, creating over 200,000 new jobs and supporting large energy and infrastructure investments. Greece is also involved in capacity-building, higher education, and good governance projects. This involvement not only contributes to reconstruction of the region's countries, but also fosters optimism and opportunity among their citizens.

Continuing the mythological metaphor, the minister warned that the road to Ithaca is hindered by several serious, unsolved political issues. During her remarks, she identified two such impeding issues – the first and most essential for the region being Kosovo. The Foreign Minister underscored the need for a viable and functional settlement endorsed by a UN Security Council resolution. She declared that this settlement should be compatible with the entire region's European perspective, and that great care must be exercised. Careful attention should be paid to the sequencing of events; and the process should not be driven by tight, rigid schedules. The second issue she mentioned draws far less attention than Kosovo, but remains intrinsic to the meeting's agenda of the "Balkans as a Source of Peace and Stability in Europe." It concerns the pace of adopting and implementing reforms, which is not always satisfactory. The minister reminded participants that, despite the commitment and support of the international community, responsibility for progress lies, ultimately, with the countries of the region themselves. They must consolidate democratic institutions, fight against organized crime and corruption, and ensure the safe return of refugees and internally-displaced persons. The countries of Southeast Europe, the minister declared, must take full ownership of their future path to Ithaca.

The lack of rule of law in certain areas, organized crime, porous borders, judicial failures, sluggish economic performance, and ethnic tension are some of the additional problems that still confront the region, and are of particular international and European concern. Peace is far from guaranteed, and stability and economic development are far from being sustained. But, Minister Bakoyannis declared, "we must not overlook the resilience and commitment of the peoples of the region who are looking toward their European future. We must help to shape their future lives and destinies. This is both a privilege and a responsibility that requires will, vision, and a great deal of political courage."

PER President Livia Plaks began her remarks by pointing out that this, the ninth Balkan regional roundtable on interethnic relations organized by PER, is occurring at one of the most crucial moments in the history of the region. It is a time when dialogue on solidifying peace gains already achieved in the region and making further progress in the direction of democracy, stability, and more complete integration into the European and Atlantic communities is intrinsic to the vitality and advancement of the peoples in the Balkan region.

The president of PER underlined that almost a decade after a series of devastating wars, the Balkans is still at a crossroads. Geographically an inseparable part of Europe, the region as a whole has not been able to integrate yet into European political and economic structures. Despite significant achievements in many areas, the stability of the region still rests on a weak foundation. Although reforms have taken place in all the countries of the area, they have been hindered by the legacy of past open-status issues, border and name disputes, interethnic hatred, organized crime, poor economic performance, and political uncertainty as well as unpredictability. Although unprecedented amounts of international development aid have been poured into the region, it has not led to desired results due in large part to political instability and doubts about the future. While a renewal of past violent conflicts has been all but eliminated, the region has yet to resolve lingering ethnic disputes or consolidate democratic and inclusive institutions and mechanisms that will help prevent their reoccurrence.

She continued by stating that lately there has been some progress in the region and some cooperation partially due to the European Union membership aspirations of the Balkan states. The beginning of the accession process has become an important mechanism for committing these states to reforms thus sustaining liberalization efforts despite whatever political forces come to power. Both moderates and radicals in the region emphasize that integration into the EU is their main goal. The EU's strong involvement in the region in the past decade underscores the importance of stability in the Balkans for the rest of Europe. However, the EU has yet to offer a clear perspective to the region. Although it granted candidate status to Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the EU has set no timetable for membership. Delaying EU membership, she said, weakens the Balkan countries' incentives for political and economic reform, discourages investment, and subsequently

slows down economic growth. A stable and democratic Balkans benefits not only its residents, but also the rest of Europe.

PER has been actively engaged in improving interethnic relations and encouraging governments to adopt legislation aimed at improving relations between majorities and minorities, and thereby moving countries in the Balkans closer to EU integration. Some governments have been more successful than others and it is PER's hope that regional roundtables will provide an opportunity for participants to share their experiences and learn from one another what works.

The roundtable focused on four main themes which included: "lessons learned" from the settlement of other conflicts in the region and their implications for settlement of the Kosovo status question; the Ahtisaari plan; the role of the international community, particularly the EU, the United States, and NATO in ensuring stability and security in the Balkans; and, the question of accession to the EU, the internal challenges to meeting accession criteria in the states of the Western Balkans, and how to meet them.

"LESSONS LEARNED" AND THE ISSUE OF KOSOVO'S STATUS

An American participant pointed out that the individuals around the table shared a wealth of personal experience with peacemaking in the region, and that they were in a position to identify some "lessons" from "what has been achieved and what has not been achieved over the past decade." A series of settlements in the region that might offer some lessons with respect to "multiethnic democratic governance" include: the Dayton Peace Accords in Bosnia, which offers some lessons about designing institutions of multiethnic decision making; the Ohrid Framework Agreement, which offers some lessons about direct negotiations between disputing parties in search of principles for multiethnic governance; and the Belgrade Agreement and its replacement which ostensibly changed the nature of relations between Serbia and Montenegro.

How does one actually establish a government for a multiethnic state that achieves the authority, legitimacy and support not only of the majority, but also of ethnic minorities? How are groups and individuals from minority groups included in governance? According to this participant, the Romanian example offers some answers and important

insights into the negotiation of modalities, capacities, and institutions for the inclusion of ethnic minorities, for cooperation across ethnic differences between parties, and for the establishment of multiethnic governance. The Romanian example has been followed, to a certain extent, by Montenegro, where a similar set of challenges were successfully engaged by ethnic parties and government leaders. Macedonia's post-Ohrid experience, which has seen the efforts of party leaders to engage these issues directly, is also a useful case study for analyzing the success of implementing peace accords and how their very existence shapes the political landscape of a democratically developing country.

A participant from Serbia cited the current conflict in the Middle East between Hamas and Fatah as a cautionary example of the costs of "missed opportunities" for the resolution of conflict, and of how difficult it may be to resolve the final details at the very end of a negotiation process. "We are very fortunate that we are in Europe," he noted, "because this makes it easier to secure the commitment of resources to support any settlement." There is a high price for peace, he cautioned, and all participants must retreat from their maximalist positions. "While this may be a very high price for some, it is an art of compromise, and the reason why it is a long road to Ithaca" he stated.

According to the Serb participant, the continuing unresolved conflict in Cyprus is a reminder of just how long and difficult that road can be. "Brussels is definitely the next capital of the Balkans," he argued. "The actions of all key, responsible leaders in the region are tempered by the fact that they know as soon as a settlement is achieved, they will have to talk to Brussels about the requisites of accession." From his perspective, the countries of the region have a mutual responsibility to each other and

From left to right: Fatmir Limaj, Ali Ahmeti, Agron Buxhaku, and Clarisse Pasztory.

to Europe. "Let's not forget the fundamental European value of solidarity that came out of the democratic revolutions at the end of the 18th century; solidarity means helping each other. Whatever the settlement in the Balkans will be, we will have to help each other stand economically on our feet. Regional cooperation is one of the fundamental principles of our European future."

A participant from Kosovo contrasted the settlements in Bosnia and Montenegro. Dayton, he suggested, represented an effort to stop a war by creating a very complex set of arrangements. The Montenegrin agreement, in contrast, creates a very simple set of relations. "The more complicated a solution," he argued, "the more complicated it will be to implement and the less functional it will be for the society." To support this position, he reminded all in attendance of how Montenegro functioned well immediately, while Bosnia has gone through 10 years without achieving functionality.

Regional cooperation is one of the fundamental principles of our European future.

"Since 9/11, we no longer have the luxury of adopting complicated solutions" an Albanian participant from Kosovo advised during the meeting. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have increased the price of oil, and increased the role of Russia – two key destabilizing factors, he surmised. It was also his opinion that, at the same time, the United States has shifted its priorities away from the Balkans and toward the Middle East. "The US had been the driving force behind all the settlements in the Balkans. Russian interests in the Caucasus may now shape settlements in the Balkans as much as any other interests," he professed. "Kosovo has become 'hostage' to Russian realities and to the threat of a Russian veto; this complicates any solution." He was of the opinion that the Ahtisaari package – a recently released set of proposals issued by UN Special Envoy, former Finnish President Marti Ahtisaari, which outline Kosovo's future de facto independence – is already too complicated to implement successfully. He voiced his concern that the Kosovo conflict might eventually become a "frozen" conflict like that in Cyprus.

A Macedonian government official offered an overview of the Ohrid Agreement and its implementation, of regional security issues, of the requisites of EU and NATO accession, and of Macedonia's progress in

fulfilling the Copenhagen standards – rules that define whether or not a country is eligible to join the EU. "These [EU and NATO requisites for membership] are the main motivations for progress in Macedonia, and we hope that our success will produce a positive example for some other countries in the region. Addressing ethnic problems requires political maturity on the part of all political actors in a country, including Macedonia." According to the official, the signing of the Ohrid Agreement is a significant part of Macedonian political history, and a test for its political leaders. They have dealt with a number of problems by engaging in compromise and embracing European models for solving these questions. This engagement required political energy, will, and a lot of compromises. "We were told a number of years ago that 'the road to Brussels is through Ohrid,' and that has proven to be correct. We are now being praised for our willingness to resolve problems in a civilized manner and for our work on implementing Ohrid."

But, as mentioned by the Macedonian official, the EU also constantly reminds Macedonia of its commitments. "We are particularly proud of the fact that the principle of keeping dialogue and the solution of problems within institutional frameworks has been preserved. This is manifest in the recent return of one of the opposition parties to participation in the parliament." It was the opinion of this official that these developments have positive consequences for the security of Macedonia and of the region, which is the main commitment of the government. "But such achievements cannot be gained overnight. They require constant commitment and sustained political will and cannot be taken for granted" this participant argued. "Stability and security also require regional commitments. Problems

Since 9/11, we no longer have the luxury of adopting complicated solutions.

such as organized crime, terrorism, and smuggling cannot be solved in only one country. They require a regional approach."

Another Macedonian official pointed out that the Ohrid Agreement was implemented through a series of constitutional reforms and over 70 legislative actions that regulate interethnic relations in the country. Some of these changes include improved representation of minorities in state administration, territorial decentralization of the state, and increased expenditures for local ethnic communities and for educational and cultural

activities generally. More, according to him, must still be done. Representation of Albanians in the government, in his opinion, remains inadequate as ethnic Albanians constitute 13% of the state administration, but 21.5% of the population. However, he also mentioned that the situation is much improved compared to the situation before Ohrid. The participation of Albanians in the armed forces increased from 13.75% to 16.1% from September 2006 to May 2007. Implementation of the Ohrid Agreement on adequate representation must therefore continue.

A participant from Montenegro remarked that "multiethnic states are more costly and less efficient. The main quandary in the Balkans is the problem of so-called 'weak states' that cannot deliver public goods." All the past and future agreements to solve ethnic problems should be examined with this in mind, he continued. The Ohrid solution involves both greater inclusion of minorities and capacity-building for public institutions to ensure that greater inclusion does not jeopardize the performance of institutions. It is his opinion that the solution for Kosovo should be in line with the balanced agreement achieved in Macedonia. The Ohrid Agreement called for decentralization, proportional representation, and decision making rules calling for qualified majorities on certain issues.

The solution for Kosovo cannot be adopted in isolation from other issues elsewhere in the region.

Now, as a Macedonian participant pointed out, Macedonia faces the second phase of implementation, during which greater resources must be made available to local administrations in order to make decentralization meaningful. Many of the local governments in Albanian-populated areas are held by the main opposition party, which gives a strong political dimension to this phase. In Tetovo, this official explained, the principle of double majority decision making was applied for the first time at the local level. Keeping this in mind, the participant suggested Tetovo as a possible model for Kosovo. But a European official cautioned that the Dayton experience in Bosnia suggests the application of power-sharing principles to the composition of government results in a loss of flexibility, or "space" for negotiation of compromises.

A participant from Serbia reiterated that a potential for violence remains in the region. From his perspective, the region's various agreements were successful in brokering peace but have been unsuccessful in maintaining it. While there are no open conflicts in the region, the potential for unresolved issues to escalate into violence remains strong. The unresolved question then, according to this participant, is how to create societies more or less homogenous within states as well as state institutions that function efficiently in all its territories.

A Bosnian participant acknowledged that everyone in Bosnia understands that Dayton has fulfilled its role, and a new framework for governance must be found. While Ohrid may have established efficient institutions, the Dayton settlement did not. The fact that an international presence is still required 12 years later to function on a daily basis is the most obvious sign of this failure. It is necessary, he premised, to find a new framework and establish timelines for its implementation. "And, the international community must be more unified and decisive in helping political leaders reach an agreement" he stated. In the view of this participant, when leaders cannot agree, the international community must be prepared to impose a solution. "The very threat to impose a solution may be enough to motivate political leaders to find a basis for agreement," he suggested, "as it did recently in the case of the law on higher education in Bosnia." According to him, the key issues in Bosnia are the economy and employment, but that there are also important differences in social welfare and tax policies between the entities that must be resolved. "Dialogue and agreement, a step by step approach," he concluded, "is the most appropriate means for finding solutions."

An international functionary with extensive experience in the region suggested that a "step by step" approach has to be adapted to realities on the ground. The UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is no longer an effective mission, the participant stated. From this perspective, it no longer works and can no longer keep things on an even keel under the constraints of UN Resolution 1244. Therefore, some of the "steps" in a solution must be hurried up, because conditions on the ground in Kosovo have changed fundamentally in the past eight years. The current political leadership, that is, the wider political elite, is under immense pressure because they have tied themselves to the process defined by the Contact Group, which stated the solution would be found in 2006. That political leadership has now been put at risk by the failure to meet that timeline.

An ethnic Albanian participant from Kosovo warned that "time" can no longer be seen simply as one of the costs of conflict. "The root causes for

a conflict, and for the renewal of conflict, are cemented by the passage of time," he argued, "by delay in the adoption of solutions. One comes to a point when there is no more time, as in Palestine. In the Balkans, we have spent the time we had available. Paradoxically, democracy opens opportunities to rearrange things in the Balkans, but this will require even more time."

A Romanian participant responded by pointing out that time is always crucial. According to him, impatience in the Balkans has been fueled by many expectations that have been raised by the actions of internationals, sometimes unwisely; and by the many failures of the internationals, including the inability of the EU to resolve its own internal issues. Resolution of the internal governance issue in the EU is presently stalemated, and must be resolved in order to move forward in the Balkans. The European perspective for the region must be ensured. "We therefore need to encourage patience in the region. We may all know the final outcome in the Balkans, in Kosovo," he declared. "But we need to have patience to find the right path to that outcome." From his perspective, the solution for Kosovo cannot be adopted in isolation from other issues elsewhere in the region, especially in Bosnia, and should be part of a more comprehensive, regional approach. In the most general terms, this approach must consist of the further democratization of the states in the region. According to this participant, the answer lies in the the US doing more to encourage the EU to overcome its own internal problems, which in turn, will facilitate solutions in the Balkans.

Another international official responded to these comments by acknowledging that problems elsewhere, as in Iraq and Afghanistan, have reduced the level of international attention devoted to Bosnia and the rest of the Balkans. The participant pointed out that in Kosovo, most of the agreements negotiated up to now have never come into force, so that the only lesson to be learned is that leaving conflicts unattended, leaving them frozen, does not, in fact, solve them – they keep coming back. "When Ohrid was negotiated, international actors had already learned that Dayton was overly complex and too focused on ethnic and territorial issues, so they focused on a civic approach," she stated. "The Ohrid Agreement in that sense is a better, more European, and more lasting agreement. But participants must adhere to the spirit of such agreements for them to be implemented."

This same international official also remarked that in Bosnia, the international community has come to the conclusion that the Office of the High Representative (OHR) and the Bonn powers of the OHR continue to be needed. In the official's opinion, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) decision exonerating Serbia of the accusation that it was responsible for genocide in Bosnia, yet establishing that Serbia did not do everything in its power to prevent genocide in Srebrencia, was a sound judgment that should not be debated. "But, unfortunately, instead of becoming an impetus to reconciliation," reported the participant, "the decision was manipulated by some politicians in Bosnia to try to impose changes in the Bosnian Constitution rather than negotiating change. In short, a game of 'everything or nothing' was initiated, which has led, not surprisingly, to 'nothing' and threatens to lead to the outcome of 'no Bosnia and Herzegovina at all'." The international official reported that in Bosnia, police reform has been stalled, no other major reform project can be put forward, everything has been blocked. The result of this, argued the official, is that the negotiation of a stabilization agreement with the EU has been put off. "The situation is such that international authorities have had to re-establish refugee camps in Srebrenica and Sarajevo, and veterans from one side or the other are offering their services to protect their people," the participant continued. "The situation is much worse than is being portrayed in international circles and conferences. The only good news in all of this is that everyone in Bosnia Herzegovina has come to the conclusion that the existing constitutional framework and its very complex mechanisms are no longer suitable to resolve even the slightest of political issues. The one agreement we currently have in Bosnia, therefore, is that we need constitutional reform; although everyone understands this to mean something different and pursues their own different objectives." Bosnia, in short, is learning from its own mistakes, the mistaken choices from Dayton onward, and to find better solutions.

An American participant, responding to repeated assertions of the importance of a "European perspective," asked what this label actually means. Is it the perspective adopted in Northern Ireland? If so, then the European perspective would appear to mean a long-term strategy of democratization and emergence of popular will over time, with all options on the table. Time is not a constraint on the ultimate outcome in Northern Ireland. Belgium and Spain offer other European models. The

Basque country and Catalonia are as democratic as possible, and they survive very well within a Spanish framework, which is also a democratic and European perspective. "We need to think a little bit more about the variety of approaches that have been adopted to solve ethnic, national, and regional issues in Europe, and about the long time frameworks characteristic of these solutions," he continued. "Cyprus has been mentioned here today as a negative example. Yet what does Cyprus tell us today? It tells us that the EU in fact has changed its long-standing position on local ethnic conflicts." The participant then referred to the pressure placed on Romania and Hungary to solve their mutual issues, due to the EU's insistence that "we don't import problems." In his opinion, the EU's inclination to move forward with Cyprus' application for membership despite the problems of northern Cyprus is an indication of a shift in policy. The shift in policy suggests that if EU membership is an incentive for good behavior in the Balkans, it does not necessarily mean the problems have to be solved completely before one achieves EU membership, and that EU membership itself may become a modality by which local problems can be solved.

A Serbian government official argued that the best approach to the remaining political conflict would be to opt for a political compromise. The framework for such a compromise is to be found in the norms of the international order and in international law. From his perspective, this is the path to stability, and other approaches threaten to turn the region into a zone of instability. "The Serbian government remains firmly committed to European integration, and ready to fulfill all the requisites of accession," he stated. "We are prepared to fulfill all our international undertakings, including cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia (ICTY). But Serbia is not prepared to accept any imposed solution, especially with regards to a part of its territory. Any solution must conform to the principles that apply to all other countries of the world." In his estimation, this includes the latest version of the Ahtisaari plan. "It is totally unacceptable. We are convinced the UN Security Council is the place a solution will be found for the status of Kosovo and Metohija within the Republic of Serbia. We are prepared to seek a compromise solution within existing international norms and laws." He also reminded participants that any solution that does not conform would be completely unacceptable and would be rejected by all authoritative state institutions in Serbia. "If debate in the

Security Council does not produce a result, we should open a new round of negotiations."

THE AHTISAARI PEACE PACKAGE

A participant from Kosovo argued that the Ahtisaari plan is a compromise that opens up new perspectives for the people of the region. Without such a settlement, it will be far more difficult, and perhaps even impossible to achieve integration into the EU or to attract international investment in the development of the region, he suggested.

A Serb from Kosovo argued that the Ahtisaari plan is not, in fact, a compromise between the Kosovo Albanians and the Serbs. It is a compromise between the Kosovo Albanians and the international community. By defining the Kosovo Serbs as a minority, and focusing on the issue of minority protection, he argued, the Ahtisaari plan sets the stage for future challenges to the rights of the Serbs and other minorities in Kosovo. Serbs should be treated differently. "They are not in a bad situation in Kosovo because they are a minority; they are in a bad situation because they are Serbs. The situation can be resolved only if it is understood as an ethnically motivated issue." While the other minorities are important, he claimed, a multiethnic Kosovo cannot be created without having the Serbs on board. "If Serbia is not on board, there is no possibility of implementation, there is no sustainability, and there is new tension – it means no solution," he declared. In the perceptions of the common people, among Serbs in Kosovo and Serbia, there are many parallels between Kosovo and Republika Srpska in Bosnia. Russians, according to him, are the new factor. Drawing from a somewhat widely held perception, the participant maintained that Kosovo is now in the hands of the United States and the Russians, and that the EU has all but withdrawn because of deep differences among the EU members.

A participant from Albania suggested that he did not see any military threat to the peace and security of Europe emanating from region. Instead, he saw "failed states, states that cannot 'deliver' and then crash, as the most likely source of future instability." The unresolved final status of Kosovo raises the specter of instability. "We need a solution because the status quo is untenable, unacceptable. The procrastination in Belgrade and Moscow is definitely not helpful. We need to have a strong decision by the international community."

A Serb participant from Kosovo pointed out that June-July 2007 is a critical time for the Kosovo Serbs, because it is the end of the school year and parents must decide where to register their children for school in the fall. Under such uncertainty, parents may opt to enroll their children in Serbia. "At least one parent will go to Serbia with them, and we will have at least two-thirds of the Kosovo Serbs transferred to Serbia, living under very poor conditions. We need the international community to guarantee, bluntly and strongly, that there will be no violence against Serbs in Kosovo." The Serb participant agreed that the United States is the most important actor in the issue, and that KFOR must declare that whoever uses violence will be met with force. "We are fed up with the term 'European perspective,'" he professed. "Tell us what this means, tell us when we will enter Europe. In the meantime, will Europe help us develop infrastructure and employ 600,000 people who are unemployed? Instead of empty promises, please give us something very concrete."

An American diplomat in the region declared that it is US policy to ensure that Kosovo maintains a viable Serb community within its borders and that Kosovo Serbs are not the victims of miscalculations on the part of their Belgrade leadership, their Kosovo leadership, or for that matter, the international community. Under the Ahtisaari plan, according to this participant, some 90% of Kosovo Serbs will live in Serb-majority municipalities, and 55-60% will live in the United States KFOR sector. There will be double-majority rule in eight crucial areas of national legislation in Kosovo, and guaranteed levels of representation in central and local institutions and cultural and financial links to Serbia. Therefore, he concluded, if the Kosovo Serbs wish to try to build lives for themselves in Kosovo, they will have an opportunity to do so.

A participant from Hungary active in European institutions identified the status of Kosovo, and the consequences of any decision on status, as the biggest challenge for regional stability. "A decision that rewards one side and punishes the other is not a solution. But the Serbian elite must recognize that Kosovo has been lost. Even as early as the 1970s it was clear the Albanians did not want to live with the Serbs. Serbia would be better off not having to have to deal with the problems of Kosovo," he concluded. He also noted that any solution must be adopted through a UN Security Council resolution so as to create a legal basis for the EU's replacement of UNMIK.

An Albanian participant from Kosovo argued that there can be no democratic Serbia without an independent Kosovo, and there can be no democratic Kosovo without independence. In his view, "we can not have a stable democracy if there is an outstanding issue or conflict as big as Kosovo's status." While some participants had spoken of the potential consequences of a solution in Kosovo, he emphasized there are also consequences of not acting. "The negotiations in Vienna were designed to minimize the consequences of what we are facing. We need to do something that is 'just' even when there will be consequences. We are not going to turn the world upside down. But, when we have had so many tragedies, so much anger, of course there will be consequences. But there will be some justice done too." He suggested Albanians have been patient only because the United States urged them to remain patient. Without US influence, things would have been very different. When people are told they do not have the right to decide their own fate, he argued, that gives them a reason to question the situation. "Yes, we do know what will happen in Kosovo. It will be independent. But, knowing that independence will happen is not enough – it must happen soon."

An international functionary from the region warned with respect to Kosovo that a process has taken place since March 2004 that involved the United States, the EU, the Russians, the Contact Group, and it has come up with a solution for what is an untenable situation. The mandate of UNMIK is over, 1244 is an obstacle, and the current status cannot be maintained. Instead of waiting until after the problem escalates beyond the point of return, a solution was found in the form of the Ahtisaari plan, which has been adopted by both the EU and the United States, and until January by the whole Contact Group. The only reason it has not been implemented is that one state that is a permanent member of the UN Security Council has threatened a veto. Had that not happened, he argued, the Ahtisaari plan would have been implemented by December or March. The US is now in the situation of trying to find a way to pass a resolution, or in the case of a veto, to find an alternative means of implementing a solution.

An American diplomat asserted that it is the Kosovo Albanian leadership in Kosovo, and the international actors with personnel on the ground who have made the greatest investment in the region, and who have the most to lose from violence. It is they who have done the most to calm

the populace and help prevent violence in Kosovo, he affirmed. "The United States has always supported and encouraged a European Union that could act more rapidly and decisively and in a unified way on foreign policy issues. But the timeline for constitutional reform and expansion of the EU is far longer and the issues are more complex than the Kosovo issue," he stated. The timeline for resolving the Kosovo issue is far shorter, he argued.

The US diplomat reaffirmed that the United States has no interest in a renewed Cold War with Moscow, and that the rhetoric one hears from Moscow is simply rhetoric and does not reflect the actual state of cooperation between the US and Russia. "There are good reasons why Russia has doubts about the Ahtisaari plan," he conceded, "and we have taken them and do take them seriously in the Contact Group over the past eight years and today. The Ahtisaari plan is not brilliant, but it is the least bad plan available for promoting ethnic reconciliation and stability, and for promoting a European perspective for all the people of the region." The *status quo* is unsustainable, and it is unthinkable to go back to the *status quo ante*, that is, pre-1999, he warned. But, "if there are specific proposals from Moscow or Belgrade or anywhere else that address specific issues and concerns, they should be considered as part of an effort to reach a less conflictual resolution. We would like Russia to take seriously the fact that there are other Security Council members who have personnel on the ground, at risk in Kosovo, and their views must be taken into consideration as well."

The American view, he suggested, is that Kosovo independence would not be a precedent for any other case. But there will be people who will assert it is a precedent for their own ambitions. Finally, much more important than names, borders, or constitutions – the most important factor that will determine the success of every state in this region is the degree to which governments fight corruption and organized crime as their primary concern.

A Serbian functionary declared that there are four pillars of stability in Southeast Europe: the EU Badinter Commission final conclusions, the Dayton Accords, the UN Security Council Resolution 1244, and the Ohrid Framework Agreement. Any change in these pillars, he argued, must apply not only to Serbia or Kosovo, but to all the states of the region and even the whole post-Soviet region. Any change to 1244 must be a decision of the Security Council. "We wish to solve the problem of

Kosovo together with the Albanians. The Ahtisaari plan provides a basis for moving forward," he claimed. But, according to this participant, President Bush's statement in Tirana that "sooner or later, you have to say enough is enough, Kosovo is independent," has made any further negotiations unacceptable to Kosovo Albanians.

A Serbian opposition figure expressed concern about the potential for violence in Kosovo, and warned of the potential for spillover into Bosnian politics. Solution of the status question may very well reopen other border issues in the Balkans. He emphasized that the status issue is the dominant issue in both Kosovo and Serbian politics, and that it cannot be "frozen" like the Cyprus conflict. He suggested that Kosovo was in fact a divided society and implied that the solution might involve a divided state, or partition.

A participant from Montenegro asked how would it be possible to keep Kosovo inside of Serbia. "I cannot see a way to do this," he declared. Is Serbia ready to integrate Kosovo into the political system of Serbia? Can Serbia survive the integration of Kosovo? Is Serbia ready to accept Albanians into the government in Belgrade? Is Serbia ready to finance the ambitions of Kosovo? Does Serbia have the power to protect its national interests and at the same time keep Kosovo inside its borders? It is a fact of history, he stated, that in war one either loses or gains territory. "The Serbian political leadership must create a consensus inside of Serbia to protect the national interest of Serbia by closing the Kosovo issue. It is better for the Serbian elite to take the initiative than simply to wait."

A participant with vast experience in regional and European institutions emphasized the importance of accompanying the adoption of any solution with respect to Kosovo with a statement of clear support for the integrity, security, and status of Serbia. This is a means of supporting stability and security that has been entirely neglected up to now.

THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

An international functionary from the region pointed out that incentives provided by international actors, even "carrot and stick" approaches, cannot achieve real change on their own. There must be a genuine interest on the part of both member states of the EU or NATO on one side, and the local actors on the other, to do these things.

A participant from Greece observed that right now, Europe and the Balkans are at a delicate moment during which each side is trying to figure out how to do what needs to be done. "We know what needs to be done, but democratization has made it far more complicated a task. Europe needs to wake up and realize that if it cannot resolve the Balkan question, it cannot make further progress," he continued. "A proper visa regime is not going to be much of a threat to Europe. It is an issue that has become caught up in all kinds of populist politics. The youth of the Balkans are completely isolated, unable to travel even a few hundred miles to experience 'Europe.' This is tragic. Europe needs finally to establish a firm end date for accession of the Balkan states. If it does not do this for the 20 million people in Balkan countries who are already surrounded by the EU, it resembles sanctions against them." The Kosovo negotiations, from his perspective, have produced a bizarre outcome. In his opinion, the talk is about creating a series of Serbian Bantustans inside a territory that is a quasi-independent protectorate of Europe. This amounts to nothing more than "dressing the animal in a new hide," he concluded.

A Serbian official acknowledged that the Balkans is definitely not a source of stability and security in Europe, but turned the question around to ask whether Europe is a source of stability and security in the Balkans. Europe has not been such a source of stability since 1991, he suggested. It not only failed to provide security, but it also poured oil onto a burning fire. "Without the United States, we would not have Dayton, and peace in Bosnia," he argued. "Again, in 1999 and 2001, in Kosovo and Ohrid, the US role was essential. Serbian membership in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) is due entirely to the influence of the United States. On any serious security issue, Europe is not a factor, it is the United States of America. It is US soldiers on the ground in Kosovo who are respected, not European forces. Some members of the EU have abused their membership by meddling in Balkan affairs – for example, Greece on the Macedonian issue, Hungary in Vojvodina, Slovenia with respect to the border with Croatia. In this sense, Europe has been a source of instability. The situation in the Balkans is now very different from what it was in 1995, when a solution could be imposed from the outside. Any solution for the region must now be a democratic solution. Europe should simply be very strict in the application of the Copenhagen criteria. Rule of law, for example, would automatically produce cooperation with The Hague. Since regional cooperation would

follow naturally from Copenhagen criteria, Europe should be consistent in its approach to the region." Why, he asked, does Europe push decentralization as a principle of governance in Macedonia, but not in Kosovo, only 50 miles away? Europe is going to have to pick up the bill for the decision in Kosovo, and should therefore take more direct responsibility. "We must have European, democratic solutions to the problems of the Balkans," he argued.

A representative of the EU asked in response whether policies on decentralization or the institutional responses to ethnic issues – whether it is Badinter majorities, equitable representation, or others – must be the same in all the countries of the region. "Of course people look across the border. But the particular arrangement in a country may be the result of the particular internal democratic procedures of that country. Is it necessary to have the same arrangements on ethnic issues in each one of the countries of the region?" the participant asked.

Europe needs to wake up and realize that if it cannot resolve the Balkan question, it cannot make further progress.

The Serbian official replied, "I don't think you need to have the same particular arrangements, but you have to apply the same values and the same principles." Everyone reads the press and knows what is going on in the neighborhood, knows how the EU is treating each of the countries in the region. "I was present in the meeting when Javier Solana insisted that there be two separate police forces for Serbia and Montenegro. Now, in Bosnia, the EU is preaching something completely different. You no longer have Milosevic across the table from you, who has to fear you because he has killed thousands of people. You have democratically elected leaders across the table who will look at what you are proposing and say 'this is a pile of rubbish' because you are telling me one thing now and were telling others something completely different at another time."

Another European functionary, with long experience in the region, disputed the suggestion that decentralization was not part of the international approach to Kosovo, as well as the assertion that the Ohrid Agreement was a product of American rather than European efforts to address the situation in Macedonia. She argued that peace treaties must address the root causes of the conflict at hand. Since the causes of conflict vary from place to place, it is obvious that treaty arrangements or solutions will have

to vary from place to place. They will have to focus on the issues that matter in that particular place. "The fact is that we keep learning from each settlement. The Ohrid Agreement was much much better than the Dayton solution, and the Ahtisaari Plan is better than Ohrid." There are two basic conditions for successful settlement of conflicts: "Agreements are to be served," and "If I make an agreement, I must trust that my partner will live up to the agreement and not reopen it at the next moment." These conditions have been absent in the Balkans. Finally, enlargement processes have not stopped. There is a roadmap, there are stabilization agreements, and delays in those processes are due to the failure or inability of states to meet their obligations under these agreements.

A participant from Hungary noted the difficulty of helping the Balkan states stabilize themselves. He suggested it would take a decade to achieve integration of the region into the EU, and asked what the EU might do in the interim to improve conditions in the region. From a Balkan perspective, another participant argued, it looks like enlargement has simply stopped. When looking at Croatia and Macedonia, one must wonder why they have not received a firm date for their accession. If enlargement has stopped, then the European Union should be thinking about creating some other intermediate steps or status, short of membership. If being a full member is a goal for the future, what are the intermediate steps? Another participant asked whether there can be some sort of privileged status for the Western Balkans, as Europe is considering for Turkey.

Another international functionary in the region argued that, eventually, Europe has to embrace the Western Balkans with full acceptance. Date-setting and other elements are part of this. He emphasized that Serbia has been and remains the key to stability in the region. The remnants of the Milosevic era must be eliminated. The issue of compliance with the ICTY, has to be resolved, and Kosovo has to be finished so that Serbia can look forward instead of being mired in the past. Until that is done, it is problematic for Belgrade to move forward.

Every combination of carrot and stick employed by Europe and the US to get Serbia to change has failed, the participant continued. The Western Balkans must be incorporated into Europe quickly, and the EU has to commit itself to achieving this. It is extremely important for Europe that this region is stable and secure, as this region is part of Europe. The region must reach the point where foreign troops are no longer required, because it is difficult to make progress "as long as there are boots on the ground." With respect to crime and corruption, it takes a long time to achieve progress. He reminded participants "it took decades for the United States to confront its own organized crime problem, even with a strong economic and political base. There is no quick fix to these problems. It is a long-term task." It is ludicrous to beat up the Balkan states over the crime issue. It takes a sound economy so that police and judicial officials can be paid salaries they are unwilling to risk, political will, and an electorate that says "enough is enough." The international community has to change its rhetoric and focus not on fixing these problems but on creating the conditions that will allow the Balkan states to fix these problems, he concluded.

MEETING EU ACCESSION CRITERIA

An EU official pointed out the paradox that everyone believes the EU accession process contributes to stability and plays an important role in strengthening moderates in each country, yet that process is seen as distant and bureaucratic – the word "ownership" is too often used and abused in this process. But there is a strong sense of ownership on the part of the people who are managing the process in each country, he observed. In Macedonia, for example, local leaders have made the requisites of the accession process their own internal ideology. They have taken over the task of "preaching" the virtues and necessity of accession. This is essential, the participant argued. Local leadership must believe in accession and in the value of the criteria. Just by looking across the border to Romania and Bulgaria, one can see that success is possible. It is not necessary that all problems be resolved in advance of accession. There are cases in which this is not the case. But, the various specific criteria must be fulfilled.

The Balkans really can be a source of stability and security for Europe, he continued. A serious effort to tackle the problems of crime and corruption and establish the rule of law is extremely important. A high level of trust must be established among the states of the region. It should be remembered that the process of European integration began as a reconciliation effort in the wake of a very bloody war, to make future war impossible. The Balkans brings the EU back to its very founding mission, which is sometimes taken for granted. Western Europeans have forgotten their own histories of conflict. When Balkan states take ownership of the

process and begin to achieve the Copenhagen criteria, enlargement will continue. On the side of the EU, there are some things that can be done, such as facilitation of the visa regime, which is a very concrete indicator that the EU is serious about integration. This step is being taken, and others will be taken as well. Contrary to the metaphor of Ithaca mentioned at the start of the session, Ithaca is the goal and not the journey. The reforms necessary to meet accession criteria do bring benefits. But membership in the EU still offers the states of the region the greatest benefits, not the process of getting there.

A NATO representative reminded participants that the meeting of NATO ministers which concluded just the day before reiterated the NATO commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration of the Balkans as a long-term goal. Both Bosnia and Serbia have been granted PfP membership. While integration in the case of NATO is much simpler than in the case of the EU, it still is not a "given." It is also important for the states of the region to understand what actually is required to achieve NATO integration. With respect to Kosovo, the local leadership has acted in a very responsible manner. NATO continues to support the Ahtisaari package and to call for a UN Security Council resolution. "We continue to make an effort to engage Russia in constructive dialogue, and we are already prepared to play the part assigned to us by the Ahtisaari plan." He continued by stating that "The investment NATO countries have made in the Balkans is huge, and it is widely understood that the security of the Balkans is also our security."

... the process of European integration began as a reconciliation effort in the wake of a very bloody war, to make future war impossible. The Balkans brings the EU back to its very founding mission ...

An official from a Balkan state engaged in the accession process argued that his country was able to make progress only when it decided to turn its back on the past. This was achieved only when the country committed itself to full cooperation with the ICTY. "Kosovo is Serbia's past, not its future. The sooner Serbia gets rid of it, the better" he stated. In his estimation, Serbia should not cling to an abstract right and ignore reality, and Serbia cannot trade Kosovo for membership in the EU. There is no such thing as a 'discount

accession' to the EU. It is time for Serbia to look to the future. Serbia and all the Balkan states must enter into the global economy before they are all passed by entirely. On the EU side, it is very important for the Balkan countries to be told "when." The EU needs to establish a calendar for the states of the Balkans.

An American participant argued there is a way to establish a date certain for accession without undermining the value of accession as an incentive for good behavior, meaning implementation of the specific criteria. "You must establish a date far enough into the future that there can be a reasonable expectation it can be met, and at the same time you establish that this is the only date possible. In other words, a state meets the criteria by this date and they are guaranteed EU membership. Failure to meet the criteria by this date means it will have to wait 100 years until it can get in." This method will create clear incentives for local leaders to meet the criteria, hand them ownership of the process, and create certainty about there being a payback for doing all the hard work necessary.

There is no such thing as a 'discount accession' to the EU.

An Albanian leader from Kosovo suggested that there is a perception in the Balkans that the criteria for accession are, in fact, "flexible," in so much that different criteria apply at different times. This inconsistency leads to frustration over the uncertainty of the process. The *acquis communautaire*, for example, has greatly expanded over the years. In his view, the EU is more than just a "club" one enters simply by fulfilling certain criteria. The European Union is an identity as well as a set of activities that affect the daily lives of people. If the strictest criteria are to be applied, then states of the Balkan region will have to wait a very long time before they can enter the EU. In his opinion, this plan could backfire, and the EU will have to invent another process for the region.

Connected with the EU's image as inconsistent with regards to accession criteria, a Serbian participant brought up the point that there is a perception that the EU is insincere about wanting more member states, especially in regards to states in the Balkans. For whatever reason, be it a reversion to isolationist policies or simply an economic fear of overburdening the system, EU actions and policies towards the accession of certain Balkan states denotes an obvious reluctance bordering on dis-

crimination. The current strict visa regulations are a symbol of this diffidence, as they not only tell the people in the Balkans that they are unwelcome in the rest of Europe, but also tell the people in the rest of Europe to not welcome them. He also stated that rhetoric in which membership in the EU is synonymous with membership in Europe confuses the reality that being part of Europe is a geographical reality whereas EU membership is a political choice. According to this participant, relaxing these visa regulations and allowing freedom of movement within Europe will bring the Balkans closer to EU standards through the simple acts of intermingling and direct engagement.

A participant from Albania argued that for the Balkans to become a source of stability and security in Europe it would first have to become stable and secure. To be stable, one needs stable and secure states, with clear statuses and defined borders, mature enough to give up parts of their sovereignty to the EU. Macedonia is not a traditional nation-state with a clear majority and a minority. The Albanian population there is a community, not a minority. "I am optimistic about Macedonia because both the Macedonians and the Albanians have realized they must live together, and the international community has made it clear they must share their common state," he said. "They have negotiated the Ohrid Agreement and this gives us hope they can, in fact, resolve their problems," he continued, "but Bosnia is a different situation. The Dayton

From left to right: Jovan Manasijevski, Jon Ryan, Milan Ivanovic, and Dusan Prorokovic.

Agreement has created a state that is not functional. It must become a functioning state. And the status of Kosovo must be settled." According to this participant, the Balkans will at last become stable and secure only after a resolution for Kosovo. "In order to provide for a really stable Balkans, it is necessary to change the mental clichés that are rooted in prejudicial and contemptuous understandings of others. This requires significant change of our educational institutions and, especially, curricula. It is essential to review and reform our textbooks," he concluded.

An American participant pointed out that there is a major political problem for Balkan leaders' intent on pursuing a "European" strategy and building effective democratic and multiethnic governance: moderate political leaders have proven to be vulnerable in elections throughout the Balkan region. He invited the participants to look deeper into the issue of why moderates lose elections and who is responsible for that. "Why are the moderates losing power in several countries of the region?" he asked. "Why are they being replaced by nationalists or are forced to transform themselves into radicals?"

... being part of Europe is a geographical reality whereas EU membership is a political choice.

A participant from Albania replied to these questions by asserting that such a process is the price of democracy and is in democracy's very nature – that in a democratic process someone is always being replaced by someone else. A participant from Croatia suggested that such a process is due to the complications of transition, and that following a successful transition to democracy tends to become normal in the Western sense of the word.

The American participant disagreed with these suggestions. The answer to the question why moderates are losing out to nationalists and populists in several of the Balkan states today does not, in his opinion, lie in the "nature of democracy" or in the "nature of transition." He agreed that transition makes moderates vulnerable but it does not necessarily threaten their success. In fact, in a successful transition, moderates end up competing against moderates even though they represent different ideologies (social democracy, liberalism, conservatism). The answer, according to him, is that moderates in government have not been able to deliver on their promises to their constituencies. Responsibility for their

failure to deliver has to be shared among others by outside actors who want to see moderate, democratic governments in the Balkans as the main source of stability and security. The participant requested that international representatives ask themselves the question: "What are Europe and the US doing right now to make the job of moderates in government easier?" However, he cautioned, moderates in each of the Balkan states must also learn to cooperate with one another, and work together, often across ethnic lines, to deliver benefits to their constituents. "The cooperation of the Montenegrin and Macedonian governments with moderate opposition leaders from ethnic political parties outside the government is very encouraging. If Kosovo leaders engage in the same kind of internal dialogue and cooperation, if Macedonia and Montenegro meet EU criteria, if Bosnia makes progress, then and only then will stability and security be achieved," he concluded.

A participant from Russia addressed the question why nationalist politicians win, and moderates lose support. Citing Tocqueville, he argued that when rising expectations remain unfulfilled, populations grow more aggressive. Entrance into the EU might actually increase greater frustration for the Balkan populations. This dissatisfaction might be avoided by adopting specific media and other programs to encourage change in the perceptions and values of the Balkan peoples.

A European representative, after listening to all the discussion about accession to the EU as becoming part of Europe, remarked that it "makes someone from the Council of Europe feel very much like the little sister with a lot of friends who just want to meet the big sister who is more attractive, more glamorous, although she shares very much the same background." According to this representative, the Council of Europe has provided a roadmap for fulfillment of the Copenhagen criteria, which are to a great extent the same as the Council of Europe's values and standards. None of the Western Balkan states have fulfilled all of those standards, even after in some cases ten years of effort. The EU should be telling the states of the Balkans "look, here is what the Council of Europe is putting on the table, more than 200 treaties covering all the issues, that is your homework. Please fulfill it before we move on."

A Romanian participant acknowledged, regretfully, that the Western Balkans is not a source of stability and security. "I agree that it must be stable and secure itself for it to become the source of stability" he continued "and perhaps it is stable now, but certainly not secure in its

stability." According to him, some argue that if Kosovo were to become independent now, then the region will become safe and secure – but there is also a different view. "Others argue that if Kosovo were to become independent now, hell would start in the region. I do not want to say which view is right and which is wrong, but we need to take these differing views into account. We need to consider both views, and that takes time." From his perspective, what Europe can do to resolve this issue is to give a clear perspective to the region, to leave no doubts about the future of Kosovo and the rest of the region. A clear roadmap to eventual membership in the EU could prove essential. There are two mistakes to avoid, according to this participant. These roadblocks could be described as "moralism" and "narcissism." He urged the participants to "remember that many of the problems in the Balkans have their origins in Europe."

From left to right: Vassilis Maragos, Livia Plaks, and Genc Pollo.

CONCLUSIONS

Several key conclusions emerged from the discussion in Athens. There was widespread support for:

- Setting a clear date for accession for the remaining states of the Western Balkans offers an important incentive for fulfilling the difficult challenges of meeting accession criteria;

- Fulfillment of accession criteria should be understood as an important benefit for the states and peoples of the region, irrespective of the date of eventual accession;

- The EU must act to facilitate the ability of states in the Western Balkans to fulfill accession criteria;

- Fulfillment of criteria may not be fully possible in any reasonable timeframe; that is, in a timeframe that sustains the credibility of the EU commitment to enlargement. Therefore, the EU should consider either (a) easing the expectations of fulfillment, as it has done for Cyprus with respect to resolving its internal and international conflicts, or (b) creating an intermediate or special status for states facing particularly difficult challenges of transition to European standards, as a means of strengthening processes of change.

- Relaxing the EU visa regime for the people of the Western Balkans will help ease the burdens of transition and will open up the people of the region to Europe.

From left to right: Nenad Djurdjevic and Senad Sepic.

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