

EU and Western Balkans States (WB6) – Kosovo

November 23, 2020 - Siget 18 C, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia

- 10:00 **Welcome Address**
Gordan Akrap, PhD
Hybrid Warfare Research Institute
Holger Haibach
Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Zagreb
- 10:10 **Keynote Speaker**
Gordan Akrap, PhD
Hybrid Warfare Research Institute
- 10:30 **Discussion**

Norbert Beckmann-Dierkes, PhD
Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Belgrade
Prof. Jehona Lushaku, PhD
University of Prishtina, Departm. of Political Science
Dušan Janjić, PhD
Forum for Ethnic Relations, Belgrade
Jeta Krasniqi
Kosovo Democratic Institute (KDI)
- Hosts:**
Holger Haibach
Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Zagreb
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Holger Haibach

On behalf of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation I would like to welcome you to our next programme in the series “the European Union and the Western Balkan 6”. Today we are covering the country of Kosovo and I am very happy to have all the distinguished guests with us who are going to discuss the matter concerning what is ahead of us and what has happened in the history.

I would like to very much welcome Gordan Akrap, the head of the Hybrid Warfare Research Institute. He is our partner and we have done some very interesting conferences together during the last two years. Gordan please start. Give us an intro to what we are expecting in the next hour to come.

Gordan Akrap

Thank you, Holger. It is my pleasure to be with you. Thanks to all of you who have joined us today, and I extend my special thanks to our guests from Kosovo and Serbia. Thank you for accepting our invitation and allow me to give you a short introduction to the topic. Please, later refer to that, and then you can present your paper.

The disintegration of Yugoslavia, as was plain for us to see, and as a process that could not be stopped by either external or internal intervention, practically began in early 1989 with the beginning of a hunger strike by miners in the Trepča mine. Their protests went against the abolition of Kosovo's autonomy by Serbia (I now skip over other events such as the Croatian Spring of 1971, the Serbian Spring of 1974, the Kosovo-Republic Movement of 1981). The repressive actions of Yugoslav and Serbian institutions (army, police, secret services), especially against the Kosovo Albanians who headed at that time the Communist League, gave additional impetus to the unification of the Albanian national ethnic group

in Kosovo, regardless of their political views and differences. Kosovo became "de jure" an integral part of Serbia, but "de facto" it was there that the process of the dissolution of Serbia began. A few months later, in June 1989, in Gazimestan, Kosovo, Milosevic announced the beginning of the wars in Yugoslavia. Kosovo became one of the gravitational-inspirational points of Serbia's aggressive policy in initiating aggression against Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro.

Serbia, of course, lost its wars in Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, but the Kosovo side watched those wars, more or less peacefully until the emergence of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in 1996. The war for Kosovo began, ending (first phase) with the defeat of the KLA. However, the NATO intervention in 1999 changed the outcome of the war, the attitudes and created the basis for Kosovo's independence.

The challenge with which all the socialist/communist multinational communities were faced, which is the recognition, acceptance, and creation of a sustainable multinational community, is still a challenge in Kosovo today. Namely, the Cold War ended with the disintegration of all such multinational states led by socialist/communist regimes, and the new division went according to internal ethnic principles, where national communities aspired to create "their own" nation-states and subsequently integrate into the EU and NATO. It was a process predicted by Dr. Franjo Tuđman in his book "Great Ideas and Small Nations", published in 1969. In a bloody and imposed war, Yugoslavia disintegrated into nation-states, which, for the most part, moved towards EU / NATO integration. Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIH) has a problem with its own state and democratic development because the national issues have not been resolved, specifically, there is a predominance of one nation over the others and this majority wants to be a key factor for the

establishing of the state. Such a concept burdens its positive development and it is still an open question where it will take Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Kosovo needs to learn from the experiences of others. Both the good and the bad, positive and negative. Kosovo is currently burdened with numerous and serious challenges that hinder the development of democratic institutions and processes, something that significantly affects all the domains of people's lives. Kosovo is in a very demanding economic, social, financial, security and political situation. Arrests, violence and even murders of the others, especially members of ethnic minority communities, are commonplace (they often seem to announce the start of negotiations at a high or even highest levels of decision-making). The issue of unemployment, especially of a large number of young people, is one of the key issues; the issue of the influence and strength of the various organized crime groups operating at the level of Kosovo, WB6, the EU and the world are a significant burden for Kosovo's development.

The issue of religious Islamist radicalization must also not be neglected given the growing influence of certain radical Islamist processes in Kosovo. The level of lack of trust in state and social institutions, as well as the level of mutual mistrust between the Kosovo Albanians and members of the Serbian minority in Kosovo, is extremely high. Correct me if I am wrong, but at the moment I do not see that there is a minimum level of agreement that could form a basis for starting vital processes towards reaching a sustainable political agreement between the Kosovo Albanians and Serbs; something that could guarantee a positive and acceptable completion of negotiations.

The recent so-called "mini-Schengen" agreement is a step in that direction. The question remains, of course, where this agreement

will take us. Namely, the processes of negotiation and trying to reach a solution acceptable to all parties to this crisis have been going on for a very long time without palpable progress in reaching an agreement. Such an agreement at the international level would help Kosovo, which in the meantime, having support of international institutions, organizations, foundations, associations, as well as countries such as the United States, is trying to work rapidly on the development of its institutions at the national and international level. In doing so, Kosovo continues the process of completing its sovereignty in the domain of international relations. On the other hand, mini-Schengen is an agreement that allows Serbia to interpret it to the domestic audience in the sense that Serbia does not recognize Kosovo's independence, but instead does everything for the Serbs living outside of Serbia, in terms of their integration and connectedness to Serbia. Namely, this kind of cooperation and building relations and mutual trust is one of the possible solutions to the Kosovo issue. Another possible way is the so-called "exchange of territories" which was already almost a "done-deal" (consent of the USA with Federica Mogherini being present). But, the deal was stopped following the intervention from Germany.

Kosovo wants to join the EU and NATO. Membership in these institutions must not be only a goal, but a key means to achieve the key strategic goals which are a positive and sustainable development of the society and the state in a democratic climate. Building a democratic society and state that guarantee all its inhabitants equality before the law, the right to freedom of work and life, protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms....it is along this path that Kosovo should model itself after the EU member states that have given and guarantee the exercise of significant rights and freedoms to their ethnic minorities. Both Kosovo and Serbia need peace. They need internal stability to become exporters of stability rather than

instability, to bring together rather than divide, to connect rather than disintegrate, to build bridges rather than destroy them. Intensifying economic relations, abolishing customs duties, connecting the civil society sector, the media's responsibility towards the truth and promoting a culture of dialogue, non-violence and deradicalization are some of the directions in which you need to move in order to create conditions for positive development. Unfortunately (due to the way how this had happened), possible radical changes in the Serbian Orthodox Church leadership, that could occur at the end of January next year may also be one of the stabilizing factors.

I would like to express my gratitude to of you who are here with us today, on short notice, to share your views on the present and future of Kosovo and its relations to its neighbours. Kosovo should be a source of stability and an additional tool for connecting diversities in the countries covered by the name WB6, because the relations between Serbs and Kosovo Albanians are at the core of many other challenges faced by some other countries in the WB6.

I am looking forward to a friendly, open, and academic discussion. This much I wanted to say for the beginning. Please feel free to contribute whatever you think – whether you agree or disagree.

Holger Haibach

Thank you Gordan for your introduction. I think it gives us a lot to talk about. Now I would like to turn to my esteemed colleague in Belgrade, Norbert Beckmann. I think we can call him Mr. Balkans, because in our Foundation he covered almost every office that you can cover in this region. Therefore, he has a lot of experience and on the other hand right now he has the possibility to look at things both from the Serbian perspective, as well as from the Kosovo perspective. Norbert, especially in the light of the political

development that we have seen in the last month and especially the last weeks, how do you assess the situation and what is your view of the things going on in Kosovo?

Norbert Beckmann

You are right. In these six years that I am in the Balkans, I have covered four countries, though not Croatia. But I know that is the topic for another discussion. Gordan, thank you so much for inviting me to the discussion, thank you for continuing with this format of discussions, it is a very good idea to invite experts, discuss the topics with them and see what is happening in the West Balkan 6 region. This will provide a view to every single country, to see what happens there and how we can develop certain ideas. Ideas and suggestions that are important for the upcoming steps, in bringing these steps to all the countries. By this I mean all the countries which gravitate toward the European Union - at the end of the day, they should be all in the integration process which ends with integration. There is no doubt about this because there is an absolute need for integration. There is no other way from the view of Brussels and from the view of the other EU member countries. And the west Balkan 6 countries think the same way, that they should go there, there is no alternative.

We are discussing about China, about Warsaw, about the United States, about all the stakeholders and players on the ground who know about this. Actually, it is in the globalisation manner. And it is all furthering an important interest, after the NATO bombing and after all the war news, to make this region of the world a peaceful region. We have to overcome the divisive issues, we have to discuss and find a proper way to come to a peaceful, economically successful solution for a region where people want to live and from which they do not wish to leave.

Welcome to all the other participants. With this short introduction I would like to share some thoughts with you. Firstly, from the German view and then from the view of most of the EU countries. There is no doubt in my mind that Kosovo is an independent country, and this is a point – a matter of fact, as it is - we have to be aware of. That is our point of view, and we have discussed all the pertinent issues. There are, in my view, two levels of relationship between Priština and Belgrade, between Kosovo and Serbia. Also, there are the views of some other countries like Romania and Spain to the Kosovo issue. The first level I was referring to is the most visible one, that is the level of negotiations for the EU enlargement. Especially from the Serbian standpoint. Chapter 35 needs to be discussed, the so-called other questions, but this is one of the main questions. It is a long process and a lot of different stakeholders have tried to find a solution how to manage it. It means full recognition, maybe. There could also be an alternative, but the solution makes it clear that there are no border issues, that there are no issues about how to manage the system between two countries or two different regions and to find a solution here. That is more or less the practical politics.

But a much more difficult question is the one about history and all that it entails. We know, and I wish to repeat after Churchill that history plays a huge role in the Western Balkan region. And that refers not only to the most recent history with all the follow-ups from the recent wars, it is also a question of how to find a national identity in all the countries, of how the people feel and how they struggle to find their own identities. A very relevant point in this region is where the roots are, what the reality of a nation means and which period in history is the most important one for each one of them. If you look at the current dispute between Bulgaria and North Macedonia, we see that it actually

depends on all the other questions that have a greater or lesser influence on the region.

The challenge is to talk openly about history, to take a distance from the subject and look at what is clear, what are the facts and find a way not to discuss things in an emotional way. Sometimes we have to accept different interpretations in order to find a common solution. That is one of the biggest burdens - to find a solution between Priština and Belgrade, between Kosovo and Serbia. On the other hand, if you look, for instance, at the outcome of the Berlin Process and look to the neighbourhood policy, there are a lot of steps visible, quite pragmatical and with no burdens. Now, there are three cases I wish to present. First, the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), the well-known youth organisation of the West Balkan 6. One of the most successful goals and results of the Berlin Process is this youth organization. The main office is in Tirana, they are working well and have been very successful for the last four years.

It is not always easy, within the institutions and the committees of RYCO, but there is a willingness to find a solution. And every single country of the WB6 countries provide support and follow the obligations they have. There are even no financial problems any longer, nothing at all. It works, even if there is a change of government in some of the countries. The second case is the Western Balkans Fund. They are a little bit more silent, but they are also working in the same way. And each of the six countries is cooperating, giving support, and on this level a lot of things are working properly together. It shows us that if there is a willingness, politics for the region can be quite successful.

The youngest child in this field of the Berlin Process and of the concrete politics is the transport community, which started in September last year with the aim to connect the 27 members

states of the European Union with the WB6 countries. That does not mean only roads and airports, it also means harbours and especially the railway, which is important for the next year. Because next year will be the year of the railway in the EU. Here one can see how pragmatic it is and really directed towards the common good, which is fantastic. All the people who are stakeholders in this process, they precisely know that without these pragmatical things neither politics, nor the people can come together. So if we want to develop the region of the former Yugoslavia, plus Albania, to become a successful region, then we have to become more and more pragmatic and successful in this way. People like to travel - even though it is difficult in corona times, and everybody likes an organized economy. It is very important, the segment of economy – and here you see that they are successful, finding solutions for many of the burdens they have. They know each other, and this is an important point for me. We have here more or less a big *lingua franca*, common language that the peoples here share between each other. Almost all of the above nations can talk to each other with understanding, and this is another thing which can be an asset for the upcoming years.

In my opinion, there is this version of mini-Schengen, and it is a really good idea. My message is: organize it; give the people an opportunity to work, to earn money, to have an exchange not only in terms of economy, but also culture, science, whatever you want – in these times maybe also of the health systems. And to these issues all of them seem to be open. But then, there is this other matter, the association of communities in the northern part of Kosovo. This has been dealt with in the Brussels Agreement, and it seems it can be fulfilled. We have some points that were met in the last years, and there was a political development, but we have seen what has happened: change of the government, again change of the government, elections and so on. If we have some

issues, the approach is to get some simple and easy steps forward which can become a really successful process. And the end – and with this I will close the first part – if we just look on the map and use our brains and our hearts, we will see that these six countries are a region in southeast Europe, not somewhere far away. The region is close to the European Union, it is not the backyard, it is the heart of the EU. We have to accept that we have a western part, an eastern part, a south-eastern part and a south-western part of Europe. Only in such a way Europe can be complete and be able in the future to play its role in the world that we share – and to have a chance to organize and find solutions for the future for all, for ourselves and for the generations to come.

Holger Haibach

Thank you, Norbert, this was quite an impressive introduction. I would like to single out some points that you made. I think that it is important – as you stated – not only for the Western Balkan 6 countries to become closer to the European Union and become members, but it must also be in the interest of the European Union to have them as close to itself as possible. Because this is not our backyard, it is our core in the end. So it has to be in the interest of the European Union to do that.

Secondly, you made a very valid point when it comes to the question of people having an environment where they like to live, and do not like to leave. This is something that I think is similar in Slovenia, Croatia all the way to Albania, all those countries have an issue and have a challenge to work at. I think those challenges can only be worked upon together

Thirdly, I am very thankful that you made it clear that are forms of cooperation. There are some steps. Some might call them baby steps, but there are nevertheless steps forward. I think this is important to be noticed. If you look at the region from a foreign standpoint, you might think they have not moved anywhere in the

last 20, 30 years, but on the ground, it is different, we all know that.

And on that note, I would like to invite Professor Jehona Lushaku from the University of Pristina and how do you look at the current situation.

Jehona Lushaku

I am very happy to be here today and to have the possibility to discuss with you together the EU-integration and the relations or the analysis especially concerning Kosovo. In fact, I fully agree with some of the theses presented here by you before. When we talk about the European Union and the relations to the Western Balkans, we need to have in mind all the history which the Western Balkans were going through in the last 20 years, 30 years in fact – it is incredible how the years are passing fast. The development that the European Union was going through within itself had a reflection on its approach to the Western Balkans. When we think of these two processes, we need to have in mind that today we have somehow new situations in both actors – in Western Balkans, but also in the EU. In the EU we have on one side an approach to enlargement, and at the same time the EU is learning from this process and is adding new conditionalities to the Western Balkan countries. We need also to bear in mind developments within the EU member states, such as an increase of populism within the political parties and the increase of nationalist approaches within some of the parties. This has had an impact on the Western Balkans, and it also shaped the approach of the European Union towards the region.

If we stay just a little bit more on the EU topic, we have to say that by evolving or changing its approach to the enlargement towards Western Balkans, the EU has to think more properly when

introducing conditionalities. We have had many cases when the EU has put up conditionalities, but later came to regret that process. Because, it may lead to a disappointment in the countries which are fulfilling the criteria. In this case I have to mention the visa liberalization process, the agreement on Schengen towards Kosovo. The European Commission has confirmed that all these criteria have been met, but then the Council did not have the courage to discuss this and take a decision. What is the consequence of this? It is complete disappointment by the citizens, firstly of the young people, who find themselves as in a black hole, deserted, and still facing so many other challenges. So what does the EU-integration mean for them? Nothing! Because there is no epilogue at the end. There is no positive impact of this process. In addition, there are the public institutions who are also discouraged, because they have met all the criteria, and nobody is regretting that the process is halted.

Allow me now to go inside Kosovo itself. Where is Kosovo standing at the moment? It is important to say that Kosovo within the Western Balkans is lost in the process of European integration, due to a number of reasons. It has signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement, but in general it is in the process of development, democratization is an ongoing thing. I must also stress that Kosovo has been pretty good in adopting the EU legislation, especially in view of the fact that it is a young country. Actually, the adoption of many of the regulations from the EU has been almost immediate. However, the implementation of all these laws is proving to be one of the biggest challenges, because it has to do with the functionality of the institutions as well as with the political will to implement the laws. Oftentimes we are faced with politicians who lack the courage to go to the end with the implementation of the laws. We have on the other side still very fragile institutions which have to go through many reforms, changes in the public administration.

Above all this, we have political parties which are voted into power and start introducing changes of their own into the public institutions. So, the changes that occur are done often as ad hoc decisions, linked to the political will of political parties and in some cases also of some enclosed interest groups which have cast shadow on the whole process of democratization.

So these are challenges on the political level. I see also very positive developments. For instance, Kosovo carried out very successful elections in the last years. But then we had a question mark when it came to the legitimation of the institutions. Many times, we had political crises proceeding from political party proclamations, because the biggest party did not always win the legitimacy to govern. On the other hand, a number of times we had to have the constitutional court make decisions in order to clarify the situation.

I have to underline here that when we talk generally about the challenges that Kosovo is having on the path of European integration, the rule of law seems to be the common denominator where the biggest challenges lie. It is quite paradoxical, because from the European Union we have had a lot of input in the past decades precisely with the rule of law, how to reform the system to build it up, to draft laws and regulations, to advise the courts. Somehow the whole system is not functioning as it was required. In spite of a lot of changes, a lot of reforms that have been introduced the system as such is not functioning. This has had an impact on economic development too, which is seriously lagging behind, lacking in confidence needed for foreign investments and impacting the whole situation in a negative way.

For me it is crucial that there is a consensus among all institutions and political parties that the EU is the only perspective for Kosovo. That is very important. Kosovo citizens have also been rated

highly optimistic in all the surveys. Talking about their feelings on EU-integration, of course the liberalization in connection with the issuing of visas has damaged a little bit this optimism, but still the citizens believe in the perspective and accept it as the only viable perspective. EU integration is therefore definitely on the agenda, but nevertheless it was often not perceived by the political parties as a priority. Another challenge I see is also the dialogue with Serbia, because it impacts the daily developments. Somehow, Kosovo is stuck with this dialogue and with this whole situation. We cannot speak about EU integration or economic development because of that dialogue, as it has a very strong impact on the daily political agenda. I have to underline that the expectations towards the EU are very high, because the EU is the only actor, perhaps not the only one, but surely one of the most important actors that can impact this dialogue by placing conditions to both sides. Until now, in my view, this dialogue was taking place without an end-vision of where we want to go. This situation demands a rethinking, and in my opinion the EU has to make an assessment of what has been achieved in this dialogue so far, where are the gaps, why there none of the agreements have been implemented. Following this, it has to put more effort into giving deadlines and clarifying the desired outcomes of these dialogues. In my view, the EU is more of an actor who can influence both sides, not just a facilitator.

I have doubts about the language of the discourse that the European Union uses in this regard. It has a lot of ambiguity which is damaging the process. I hear many experts say that ambiguity is a good approach, because you can make both sides happy. No. We need more concrete steps, more concrete outcomes and compromises which this dialogue should finalize, not a mere process without end, without palpable results. Also, I think that in both countries, Serbia and Kosovo, we need more commitment from politicians towards the dialogue. We see a lot of changes in

the approach concerning this commitment on the Serbian side, whereas on the side of Kosovo we never had politicians who dared to add something to this dialogue. There I see a full commitment on the side of Kosovo, but somehow the dialogue is lacking a clear plan and therefore also a vision of where we want to go. In my thinking, the EU is in the best position to take more action and make a clearer picture. I would like to stop here. I am looking forward to the discussion and questions.

Holger Haibach

Thank you very much for your insight. There would be a lot of things that I would like to discuss with you, but I will just leave it here and get the other two speakers in and then go to the discussion. I would like to turn the attention to Dr. Dušan Janjić from the Forum for Ethnic Relations. My introductory question would be: as far as I can see, there has always been a will of Serbians being Serbians, Croatians being Croatians, but the reality is different. All of the states that are here in this region are multi-ethnic. If I look at my office, I have people with a background from Bosnia and Herzegovina, I have people half Serbian and with other ethnic backgrounds. So how far does this whole ethnic question play a role when it comes to the development of countries like Kosovo?

Dušan Janjić

First of all, thank you Gordan and all the others from the Foundation for the opportunity to take part in your discussions, especially because Gordan and I have a good relationship, and in my personal opinion this example with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation is a good example of how things could be done. This is especially true for the period of 2010 and a few years later, which was the beginning of an era, when the idea of

normalization was born. I am really thankful because of that. Now to get to your question – in the latter half of my life, which is not short, I came to understand a bit of history, as I spent some time in a really dark atmosphere of the ethno-nationalism. In the beginning I was naïve, I was younger, and I was thinking that this is only a Serbian speciality, but unfortunately today I see that it is widespread also in Europe, in the European Union. You can see it with Trump and other people in America. Unfortunately, the ethno-nationalistic and ethno-chauvinistic attitude and ideology is one of the manifestations of the recent state of globalization. As we know, globalization is in a deep crisis, but still working. Now we have new terms – populism, those who think that Kosovo should become a legal entity. Generally speaking, in Serbia, the Balkans and throughout the ex-Yugoslavia, we are dealing with strong ethno-nationalistic attitudes. Basically, the politicians are using that ideology as an instrument to govern.

Now, to give some points for the discussion. First of all, I completely agree with the views from Jehona's speech. Of course, I am partially outside of it, as I am not living in Kosovo. But Kosovo happens to be a part of our life in Serbia, too. We are really interconnected when we talk about ways to overcome the ethno-nationalistic politics. Now, my organization and myself were dealing the last three years with business communities made by the European Union team surrounding Mogherini. Maybe it is non-existent, I do not know. When Lajčak came, I am not sure whether it is working or not, that office. But generally, thanks to the field research and other studies, we found that business communities are ready to cooperate. And when they have something to cooperate about, they are doing it. But the politicians generally want to control the process and sometimes even put a stop to it. Economy basically produced optimistic ideas, like the mini-Schengen by Madeleine Albright. I prefer Western Balkans because it is larger, it is part of the Berlin Process

about the intention to build a regional free economy area. And when you are following the matters, you can see that a number of steps were made. Put aside the politicians and their lack of readiness to support the idea. Sometimes politicians are manipulating the mini-Schengen because they understand that the regional component is important to solve internal issues – the development of countries like Serbia and Kosovo, and the Kosovo dialogue. Anyway, I think that this track is really good and should be supported.

Secondly, Jehona said, based on the documents and arguments, why the EU-integration is important for Kosovo. I could say that it is similar for Serbia. And we could also say that many things are a common interest of Albania too, that is sure – joining the EU, having a European future. But I fear that the last years that were spent with this argument, are more than in support of this, especially the basis for my criticism of the Lajčak period. I know very well the situation within the European Union, and it is not easy to discern clearly which idea the EU has concerning Kosovo, Serbia and the European future. But anyhow, the European Union can facilitate the dialogue.

What do we see now? Politicians, including those in Belgrade, are really skilled and keep on manipulating our readiness. Lajčak and others should say clearly what it is that they want. And which course they are pursuing. I don't wish to go into details now, if someone is interested, I could give my arguments. The only thing I can say is that we really need Germany back. Two years ago, they were really active and pushed the whole machinery, this dialogue forward, which was a real help. Including the Chancellor with her office and the Brussels dialogue. We need Germany back, especially to overview and supervise if the other countries are doing a proper job.

The last I wish to share with you now is that I am not expecting anything. I understood what Lajčak and Biden and other people were talking about. There is a lesson from our history, we were talking about history today, and the lesson is that when we have one voice both from Washington and Brussels, when they are talking with one voice, we will solve the problem in some way, in a peaceful way. I hope this happen in the coming year, but in the meantime, the times are really delicate.

Finally, the dialogue which Jehona mentioned. The dialogue, of course, is about normalization, but in substance it is about controlling the territory, the resources and the status of people living there. The dialogue finally came to touch upon that issue, or at least a part of that issue. In 2016 - 2018 that was reinterpreted in the wrong way. To be clear - the European Union also has to make an internal compromise – what is the solution? Full recognition or not, of Kosovo on the part of Serbia. This is the part concerning recognition. The second important part is the de facto control of the territory. Thanks to the Brussels dialogue, there has been a progress, with Kosovo government and institutions controlling, we could say, the whole existing territory of Kosovo, but this control is really weak in the north, where the Serbian community lives. This integration has not been accomplished to the full extent, to use the EU parlance. Anyway, this must be somehow reviewed, the question of the status of Serbian community living there. I am not in favour of the association of Serbian municipalities. I think that it is de facto acknowledged, but de jure it is not, as Jehona said. The constitution in Kosovo is something they respect. But this is not the situation in Serbia, we are playing games with our constitutional court and the constitution.

Anyway, something has to be done in the course of the dialogue, as I am expecting. Now I will not go into details regarding Serbia.

As Gordan said, maybe the next discussion will be about Serbia. At this very moment, Serbia is really a strange kind of society. Norbert knows it very well, he is living here. I could not say with any degree of certainty what it is that the leadership in Serbia wants. Serbia has no clear idea on its own vision, or the strategy. I am not sure that the Serbian leadership would want to join the EU in two days' time, if it only could. That is our problem, but it is also a problem for Kosovo and for the EU enlargement. This is where I will stop.

Holger Haibach

Thank you Dr. Janjić for your insight. I think it goes as a guiding line through all the presentations we have had so far from all the panellists, that you should play a more active role in the region. I totally agree, and it is a matter of fact that we do not have a consensus among the member states of the European Union on what they want to do in the Western Balkans. There might also be the need for the countries here to come forward more strongly in the dialogue. That would be my question to Jeta Krasniqi from the Kosovo Democratic Institute: what do you think, how can the institutions in Kosovo and Serbia and other countries contribute to getting the process more under way as it already is?

Jeta Krasniqi

Thank you very much. It is a pleasure to join this very interesting panel. I like the path the panel has taken - starting from history and now we are getting to my most favourite topic: the Kosovo – Serbia dialogue process. Before going to answer your question, I would just like to pinpoint a few things, as a response to what has been already discussed. I have a tendency of trying to look at things from a broader point of view. From what I have learned in the past years following attentively the Kosovo – Serbia dialogue

is that there is a danger of oversimplifying history or oversimplifying narratives or even facts.

Responding to what Gordan said, I cannot fully agree with how he presented the history of the 1980s and the 1990s, because in my view, what the region needs is to not to oversimplify issues, but to be aware that narratives are still very important for all communities residing in the Western Balkans. Listening to Gordan I said to myself that he never mentioned the years of oppression, of ethnic cleansing, the war crimes, crimes against humanity. This is not to criticise Gordan, but rather to make us all aware how important it still is in the region to tell stories. And this goes back to ethnical nationalism that Mr. Janjić was talking about, which has also the implications on the political situation and where we stand concerning the Kosovo – Serbia dialogue process. This is important, because I think that what we saw in Kosovo immediately after the war was a lot of talk about reconciliation. We thought too much about reconciliation, without paving the right way on how we talk about it. You cannot talk about reconciliation if you just skip over the war, the past, everything what happened, the issue of responsibility for the war crimes, seeking justice and everything else. And I think that is why we are here now, 20 years later, talking again about reconciliation without ever having discussed the things of the past. We still see a denial of war and everything else what has happened in Kosovo. I try to talk about this with many of my friends in Serbia. Yes, NATO bombed Serbia, but there has to be a focus on why NATO bombed Serbia. I think that, when we talk about narratives, politics and history in the region, it is very important to settle this issue somehow and to achieve this there has to be a more substantial and deeper discussion about things. I think this would lead us to having a sustainable peace that we all aim to achieve.

True, Kosovo is a new state, but don't think and I cannot accept that Kosovo in terms of democracy is any worse than other Western Balkan countries. It is dealing with problems that even European countries are dealing with. We are proud as a country that we have the freedom of the media and a very vibrant civil society. We were having a discussion the other day with some friends from the civil society from Serbia and we agreed that actually the civil society in Kosovo has the right to criticize the government and every public figure without fear of retaliation, which is not always the case that my counterparts have in Serbia or in other countries. I think we must have a balanced view, to look at the both the positive and negative sides, rather than rejecting a country only due to some negative things. We have to look at the progress which is underway and in this try to pinpoint where the problems are, so that we can always move ahead.

When listening to some of the remarks that were said, I would wonder whether Kosovo is a thug state. I want to stress this because I think that it is important to progress. Now let me go to the dialogue and answer the question that I was asked. Firstly, I should add something to what Mr. Janjić said about the European perspective. I think yes, indeed, the European perspective is the only way not just in terms of integration and making Europe an undivided whole, but also in terms of the reforms. This is necessary to have a type of state that we as the citizens want. We want a state with justice, better education, better economy, an efficient health care. I think that the reforms that are in the road on the way to the European integration are the reforms that we want as societies. Many relevant facts were underlined and emphasized here, and the problem, as I see it, is two-fold. As the democracies of the Western Balkans are still fragile, they still have to work with many internal problems, such as establishing the rule of law, freedom of the media, etc. On the other hand, we have the signal coming from the European Union. It is a serious

problem if ten years after the normalization we still talk and do not see a clear position of the EU on what normalization means and where the EU is trying to push countries like Serbia and Kosovo, speaking of the final agreement.

I agree with Mr. Janjić when he said that our territory concerns the status of the citizens in Kosovo. But I think it is more than that. For me as a citizen, when I look at the normalization process, I see this is a process where we close the open issues with Serbia, where we reach peaceful agreements, where we deal with our past, with all our narratives, and also have a clear path towards European integration, membership in the UN and NATO. I do not mean in any way that once we have an agreement with Serbia, automatically we will have a key to all other doors, but it does mean that such an agreement should give Kosovo the key to open the doors one at a time. At the moment Kosovo does not have that key, it does not have a European perspective, as it has not been recognized by five EU countries. If we talk about normalization and the European perspective, it has also been proposed in the UN resolution when the dialogue process was initiated. The EU must do something about offering a tangible European perspective for Kosovo.

The Stabilization and Association Agreement has been reached, and it was signed only between the EU and Kosovo, without the need for ratification in the European Parliament. But what is the EU plan for the next step for Kosovo? Where are we heading to? And we know even that the visa-issue is now the European perspective, it is not the European path, it is a separate process. So my question to the European Union regarding Kosovo is: what is your plan? What is your plan in offering Kosovo a European perspective? And now I wish to go back to what Mr. Norbert was saying about being pragmatical and practical, and I fully agree. But I think that we have after being very pragmatical and practical

about the European perspective for ten years now, about the normalization and the Agreement, and I think it is time to take a bold stand and to have a vision of where we want to push this process. This is a statement of facts. If we are talking about normalization – we are talking about recognition. If we are saying that Serbia will not recognize Kosovo, but maybe accept it in some other way, then I want to hear what Europe has to say about it, concretely: will you accept and recognize Kosovo as a state and offer Kosovo a European perspective, even if Serbia does not recognize it? Is this the ticket? This is something we have to see. We need a vision of where the region is going, but also where Kosovo is going. We are having an agreement after agreement with ambiguities, as you like to state it, we know where we are heading to, but we are here again discussing what we are supposed to do. I think it is very important at this moment, in a stalemate after ten years of negotiations and a lot of discussion about peace agreements that we actually talk about peace, that we have the vision how to deal with the past, to accept the narratives of both sides, to ask for justice for all the crimes that were committed, and to have a recognition of these crimes. At the same time, we have a clear vision from the European Union of what it was, what the region precisely wants and expects from Kosovo. Again, as a citizen I do not support the shortcuts of the European Union, but I will support and ask for a perspective. If there is no recognition by five countries, then there is no perspective.

The EU has very important leverages in its hands, the conditionality and European perspective and I think it should use it in this regard. Going to a conclusion and opening to some other questions or comments I wish to add that I totally agree with Mr. Janjić when he said that it is important to have a transatlantic unity on this matter. We saw what happened in the last two years. When we are talking about communities of Kosovo, not majorities

but communities, which is how the minorities are recognized by the Kosovo constitution and how a distinction was made. They are not called minorities; they are called non-majority communities. The Kosovo package actually embodies an even more advanced treatment for the minority communities than some European countries. We have to have on this path a clear vision of not only a patch of the agreement, but how through this agreement we are actually building peace in the region. How through this agreement we are building a perspective for the region, for Kosovo, for Serbia and for the other countries as well. And how through this agreement we will achieve sustainable peace. The aim should not be an agreement per se, the aim should be that through these measures within the agreement we achieve long-term goals. We want to see the courage and vision which Europe had when it was established in the mid-1960s. I want to see that kind of courage and the vision that we saw – which is the building-block of the current European Union. This is also an anchorage within the region. We need to patch things up or to be so creative and by being so creative we are actually losing the sense of what we are trying to do.

Thank you for hearing me out. It was a pleasure. I am of course open to any comments or questions.

Gordan Akrap

If you allow me, I just would like to comment something and then we can switch to the questions. The problem is that Kosovo needs time, and Serbia also needs time. What Jeta contributed following my introductory speech I agree with, noting that it is hard to condense all you have to say in five minutes, especially for me. I was a member of the volunteer forces from the beginning and I spent the entire war there.

We were waiting 22 years the envoy of the Serbian president to kneel in Vukovar. But even he did not say "I am sorry, for what we did." On the other hand, Dr. Janjić and myself know each other only for a few days, but I already have a huge respect for what he is writing, although we will disagree on the narrative of our war. For me, it is a homeland war, it is an aggression of Serbia and Yugoslavia against Croatia, and for him it is a civil war. So, we agree that we disagree. These are the basics, obviously there will not be a unanimous position in the future, but I hope it will not prevent us from trying to find solutions and achieving mutual agreement on some other issues. Here I have in mind this mini-Schengen area that we are talking about and the Berlin Process and the Brussels process and also, I hope that Washington will be back very soon again, inside this area. This is very important. It is important to talk. It is important to have a conversation, because every conversation is better than silence, better than leaving tensions to arise. Because only if you communicate you can get nearer to a solution. The ultimate reason why we are having these conferences is to try to find a minimum level of mutual agreement about the basics that might become a foundation for future relations. For me, there is no doubt, as Norbert said, that Kosovo is independent. Kosovo is hopefully going to have a seat in all the international organizations. This is part of the process that should be completed. And this can be done only - as both of you said - by realizing what was going on and based on those facts to try to proceed with activities and find common ground to live together and to work together. If you cannot find a political agreement soon, you can still try to make other agreements in other fields like this mini-Schengen which is trying to connect people on economic, social and financial grounds.

I heard from many people from Kosovo who lived and worked in Yugoslavia at that time that they did not get a positive reply from Serbian institutions concerning their pensions. And that is a

problem, a serious one for them. This is a kind of thing that has to be resolved in Belgrade. For example, what we did in our relations with Serbia before we reached the position of mutual agreement is to improve relations in some other fields. And I hope that in the future we will improve relations between our two countries in yet other fields that did not receive sufficient attention so far. But this is a process, going step by step. I am very sorry to see that in Serbia there do not exist politicians of the type of Konrad Adenauer in Germany after the World War II. We must still wait for a statesman to become president and leader of Serbia who will say openly: "Yes, we made a mistake." But we have a situation now that we have, and I hope that it will not be an obstacle for us to develop our relations further. Norbert, would you like to make a comment or add something else?

Norbert Beckmann

Thank you Gordan, thank you Jehona, thank you Jeta and Dušan, I will be very brief. We will need more time the next time we meet to discuss and find solutions. Yes, talking about history is absolutely necessary, talking about history needs space, and it need space with institutions, too. The Berlin Process could be one tool to develop something. It started in Warsaw, but it did not come to an end, it became too institutional and there are some people who see a lot of money, but I think it is absolutely necessary for a really wide space for different kinds of innovation; we will have not a single one, we will have a lot. But at this moment of dealing with history it is absolutely necessary to accept the view of each stakeholder in this field. Victims, officials, whoever, to put them in one room and then start. We should never forget that in this process we also use the church. The church is one of the most important players in this field. Without the church we will not get the recognition of Kosovo from Serbia and this need so much patience that I can only say "let us start".

It is a level process, but it is necessary to do it, to have space, to give people the voice to see it.

Let me put a question: what does normalization mean? The decision is not taken by the European Union or the United States. Normalization in the plan of EU-enlargement means that Serbia and Kosovo have to define what they mean by it. It is not up to the European Union or the United States or whoever to say “you have to do it in this or that way”. If you think that democracy and freedom is really the value, then those countries have to find an idea of what normalization means. That is also my private opinion, the view of recognition, but if there are some alternatives, please, let us discuss them too, and let us find a way for normalization. This has to be done by Kosovo and by Serbia. I know that we are running out of time, so I will say one last sentence - we don't have to take care of Russia, they are not interested in this solution.

Gordan Akrap

Dr. Janjić, would you like to make a comment, to add something?

Dušan Janjić

First of all, I completely agree with Jeta who said that there is no answer to the question why NATO bombed Serbia. It is true, as Norbert said, that we have to deal with the past, we need to understand history, but in reality we have three different narratives about the same event: one is the Albanian, the Kosovo narrative, which I think is 100 percent in accordance with reality, with what happened and with the humanitarian disaster that was basically stopped by the NATO bombing on Albania. On the other hand, the Serbian narrative that lasted in Montenegro for several years was really dangerous for developments in Serbia. This narrative says that Serbia and the Serbian leadership was at

innocent all the time and did not do anything. They were the good guys, but the West hated Serbia. That was the reason why the West was looking for opportunities to bomb Serbia. End of the story. Basically, a blindness towards reality, especially the widespread crimes committed by the Serbian police and para-police during 1996 and 1998. Why am I pointing that out? For three years in Serbia I had everything prepared, I had the team, but all doors were closed. And now we are looking to Washington to help us to do the research. In Serbia it is impossible to do a research which intends to change the narrative and to display the facts. We can change the perception of history only if we face the people with the facts, with reality, with what happened. That is the first comment.

Connected to that is the second topic – we shouldn't forget that without joining NATO, Serbia and Kosovo have no security package. We could talk about normalization. To be a member of the European Union is one part, an important part. But without the security framework where things will be dealt with in a peaceful way – no chance. For that reason, I hope that we will stop the so-called European Union tolerance for the stories of non-military engagement of Serbia. It is something that happened when the government was facing the unlitary declared dependency and basically it is an anti-NATO and an anti-European policy, which is pushing Serbia towards Russia. We have to be clear on that.

Thank you for listening to me.

Gordan Akrap

May I give the word to Jeta, she would like to comment on that.

Jeta Krasniqi

I think that Jehona wanted to speak before I do

Grodan Akrap

Sorry, Jehona I did not see you. Jehona, would you like to say something? Sorry, you were on the other screen I was not able to see you.

Jehona Lushaku

Yes, thank you. In fact, I have some small additional remarks to what Dr. Janjić has said. I noticed he said it was a civil war, like military police officers were involved, or that it was a non-military action and only the police forces were present. I wish only to say to him that I, myself, was one of the victims in Kosovo at that time, I was a refugee for months sleeping abroad because Serbian military forces compelled us to leave our homes. They burned the houses – and it was the military, I have witnessed it. It is a small remark, but it makes a lot of difference. So please, this is all I wanted to say.

Dušan Janjić

I agree. 126,000 soldiers were involved. But I was mentioning the so-called anti-terrorist units, who arrested and assassinated civilians. Plus the military, you are completely right. It was an enormous number of the military forces engaged.

Jehona Lushaku

In fact, I never spoke about my personal experience. But when you went through a war and saw things as they were, and 20 years

after you hear different interpretations, you have to give some of your own experiences. I am also a survivor of the massacre of Koliq and have witnessed it myself.

Another thing I would like to say is that the non-majority Serbian ethnic group in Kosovo has a very privileged position based on our constitution, and they even have a quota of representatives in the parliament. This is much more than has been given to any other ethnic group in the region. This places the Serbian ethnic group in Kosovo in a very good position. I want also to say that there is a tragic part to that – which is how the politicians in Serbia use and instrumentalize them to achieve some other political goals in Kosovo. They use them for different purposes and do not allow them take decisions by themselves, as an ethnic group in Kosovo. That is the tragic part which has led to difficulties with respect to their position within Kosovo. Otherwise, I agree with many of the theses which Jeta has mentioned. It is very tragic that we now, 20 years after the war, do not have politicians who can go beyond the discourse of the nationalistic approach, beyond what we were hearing 20 years ago.

Being still a young woman in this country, I hold the belief that young people are able to make compromises and go beyond the narrative. We need that, but of course, we must recognize what has happened during the war. And if we stick to our history as it is written in some history books, written by an author who belongs to one ethnic group, we cannot reach any agreement. I think, therefore, that it is our mission to reach agreements which go beyond this and keep before our eyes the examples like that of Germany and France. That was done quickly, bearing in mind what has happened previously in World War II.

Gordan Akrap

Jehona, can we give the word to Jeta, because we have to get to the end. Thank you.

Jeta Krasniqi

Thank you Gordan. When I hear Dr. Janjić talking and recognizing what has happened and why and answering the question why NATO bombed the territory of Kosovo. I will not use the word courage, maybe the phrase you yourself used - recognizing the fact. And this is something that is still missing in the narrative between Kosovo and Serbia. Just think how unfortunate that you have to speak of courage, when someone is recognizing facts. So I think this is a serious lack, and my perception is that it is more on the Serbian side. I think that the Serbian society, the Serbian community still does not recognize, does not know and does not have the courage to actually face what has happened. And it is this recognition, which is a way out, a way of liberating oneself from the past and giving the future a chance. Wrongdoings happen, let's face it, call for justice and move ahead, once and for all. This is what I think what we need to do.

Finally, to comment on something Mr. Norbert said. There is one point on which, with due respect and kindness, I will not agree with you. Namely, I do not think that there are alternatives to recognition, because we are talking about the final and legal binding agreement which will settle all the remaining issues. Now, if we are talking about a final agreement between the two sides, there are no alternatives to recognition. There is no alternative to recognizing reality on the ground. If we continue to make space for both sides, deny the reality, I think we will just keep dragging on this status quo, and perhaps dragging on this situation into the next generations. Again, just to conclude there, in my opinion – as

I have been working on this issue for a long time - there is no alternative to recognition. I do recognize what Mr Lajčák has said, that it is for the parties to identify what normalization is, but the EU is a strong partner, which has taken upon itself a very important role, it has taken the role of improving the lives of the citizens and in offering the European perspective, as it is stated also by the UN, by the UN resolution.

We know that neither Serbia nor Kosovo will decide to have peace just by themselves, if there is no push, if there is no leverage, and if there is no vision of where these countries are going. I think again, as I said before, that the EU has an ace up its sleeve, and it has to use this card to push countries to make the necessary compromises. To underline my point once again, I do not see any alternatives to recognition, and with this I will conclude. As Gordan said, we have to learn from the region, and you mentioned Bosnia and Herzegovina, because when we look at the best practises sometimes it requires also seeing what went wrong and how not to copy it. I think with this we have a chance as a region and the EU has a chance now with the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue to make wrongs things right and not offer any alternatives to longstanding and sustainable peace. Thank you, I took a bit more time.

Gordan Akrap

Thank you Jeta for sharing experiences, it is always of value when we can share them, the experiences of people who went through the war events, and accession, and negotiations - this might be helpful to all of you. Jehona, would you like to take this one last minute?

Jehona Lushaku

Yes, a very last minute on Norbert's discussion, that Kosovo and Serbia should find solutions by themselves. In order for the two parties to sit at the table, they have to recognize each other. This is a requirement, a precondition. If we have a failure of the one side to recognize the other, then it needs intermediation, somebody to set the rules of the game, and also help the two sides recognize each other, otherwise, as it the case now, the sides cannot find any solutions by themselves.

Gordan Akrap

I have to cut short this superb discussion. I would like Dr. Dušan Janjić to give his last one-minute comment, and then Norbert and I will close the discussion.

Dr. Dušan Janjić

Generally, I agree with Norbert's statement that Belgrade and Priština have to find the substance of normalization, but the facilitator must know what he is facilitating. It is up to the facilitator, according to the resolution of the General Assembly, and, if you like, the EU Chapter 35 with Serbia to define clearly the benchmarks or some criteria for recognizing the progress of normalization. Regarding that point, I mentioned the German government and the German Bundestag, who were really active a few years ago with the content of the Chapter, I do not know exactly how they called it. They knew very clearly what they wanted to achieve in the process. That is really what is needed – and this is my last point – please help Lajčak. If that mission fails, and it is close to end up that way, we will have a drama. Because normalization is a process which was initiated many years ago, and this is our hope. If we throw it away like this, I do not know

where we will be. A conflict, or whatever else, but it will not be good. I shall stop now. I really appreciate this kind of exchange. We have to look for ways to keep the peace, put an end to war, to realize whatever happened, but really live in peace. Thank you.

Gordan Akrap

Thank you Dušan. Norbert, would you like to make a conclusion?

Norbert Beckmann

Thank you, although I don't think it is time for conclusions, but only for some remarks. You are right, at the end of the day the goal is recognition. That is the way to recognition. It is really a long one. One more time: the decision has to be taken by Priština and by Belgrade, not by Washington and Brussels. The decision has to be taken by the institutions and the peoples in these two countries. The way to recognition is a really a long one, and we need to have steps in-between. We have the Brussels agreement, so please implement it, on both sides. This is important to show that there is progress being made. And I totally agree with Janjić that we need a moderator, that there is a need for a strong support that could be, this is my personal view - not so the European Union – it could be Lajčak or anybody else. Whatever, let us take a broad landscape, and not deal with the borders, but deal with the process itself and that takes more time. What we should not do is to understand the matter from the viewpoint of the stakeholders in Serbia and in Kosovo towards foreigners, since they are not in the position to make decisions and find solutions. That is the most important part of it at the end of the day. Thank you so much.

Gordan Akrap

Thank you, Norbert. Finally, I would like to use the opportunity to conclude this panel. Let me start by expressing gratitude to Norbert who suggested these two great panellists – Jehona and Jeta. What I would like to suggest to Holger and Norbert, as soon as the conditions allow, to use Croatia as a mediator to organize this kind of conference with a wider audience here. Maybe somewhere on the coast or in Zagreb. I think we would have a very dynamic conversation there. As Jeta and the others said, the process of mutual recognition is a long-lasting one; you have to know who you are, to know your history, to know where you want to go. Sometimes this road is full of obstacles that need to be overcome. This is a question of patience, a question of confidence, and, as Norbert said, it is also a question of realizing that, yes, we can do it together, but we need some help of a mediator. At the end, of course, it is the two of us at the table, we have to sit together and to solve it.

I would like to remind you that we are making Proceedings of our conferences, including the last conferences, so please do not hesitate, if you wish, to write a paper about what you said, so that we can publish them all together and share them within the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, within the UN, within our network. I would be thankful for that.

Thank you very much for being with us, I hope that we will stay in contact. I wish you pleasant and healthy times in front of us. Have a nice day and thank you.