

No: 004 | MARCH 2021

GLOBAL POLICY ANALYSIS

Resilience.
Sustainability.
Digitality.

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From Managing Editor

A year of uncertainty and a year-old GPA journal!

Exactly a year ago when we were acquainted with the term of COVID-19, we took an initiative and made a swift change to the virtual world. Turned NGIC in a platform for global leaders to share their insights and find solution how to survive and how to save mankind. We have learned a lot from what we have experienced in the past year and yet to learn. It has been a year of challenge for the entire world. At the same time a year of appreciation which made us think twice about what we have been granted so far. Despite all restrictions we managed to be close to each other thanks to the worldwide connection that turned our homes to the offices in such a way that we felt that warm hospitality. At the very time, we launched the Global Policy Analysis journal with hope to be among the distinguished ones. We are committed to improve the quality of publications, increase the impact factor and keep the journal relevant in the field. It is successful due in large part to the dedication of Members of NGIC who always showed their support in the very beginning and believing the success of the journal.

The first issue of GPA started with the uncertainty of the pandemic, a year later we are discussing the vaccines' safety, efficacy and access to all; the ways to revive global economy; impact to SDG in hope that it will make us leave these hard days behind and back to our day-to-day life.

For the past year, articles of members have enriched the journal immeasurably. And now also we strongly encourage you to submit novel and enlightening articles to educate the readers and support the GPA and hope that the journal will continue to be a stimulating and useful resource for many years to come.

This year promises to be enriched with full of activities as the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan declared the "Year of Nizami Ganjavi", which NGIC has already started a year with the web-conference dedicated to the legacy of Nizami Ganjavi by reviewing his prodigious production, his enormous impact and his cultural legacy. Also, with the return to Azerbaijan's control of territories that long had been occupied by Armenian and Armenian-backed forces, the geo-political situation in the South Caucasus significantly changed in 2020. The territory has many exceptional examples of important cultural monuments and artifacts that date back many centuries and even millennia. NGIC is going to foster dialogues on both protecting cultural heritage sites and identifying effective practices to achieve the lasting peace in the region. We also focus on the women's role in peace talks as well as will host an open discussion with President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to debate the security situation and its impact on the broader region. NGIC will continue working to promote learning, dialogue, tolerance, understanding to better tackle today's and tomorrow's global challenges.

ROVSHAN MURADOV
Managing Editor, GPA
Secretary General, NGIC

Resilience. Sustainability. Digitality.

Resilience.



A truly secure world or a region or a country is the one which is resilient and based on the principles of the sustainable development. To that end one can apply a panoply of solutions based on the cutting-edge technologies of the emerging digital transformation.

Numerous challenges that the world is facing, from climate change to the pandemic, security issues, sustainable development, and digital transformations are so intertwined that it is impossible to clearly distinguish them. The UN Agenda 2030 is based on 17 sustainable development goals and emphasizes the need to find solutions that help societies fulfill the set goals, while at the same time improving the living conditions and providing new opportunities. Emancipated societies that are secure, based on the principles of sustainability, and which know how to use new technologies, have perspectives of the accelerated development and survival.

A pandemic of the magnitude of COVID-19 is a new experience for today's world which does not remember (except by knowledge of facts and through the accounts of the few survivors) the Spanish Influenza pandemic at the end of World War I, while the HIV pandemic has in the meantime been largely contained. However, the length of the struggle against HIV and the difficulties in coming up with proper medication/a vaccine give a glimpse into the challenging nature of new viruses. On the other hand, the emergence of the novel coronavirus is all but not unexpected. Its sudden outbreak, however, has left a deep impact on the global economy. Since the times of the 14th-century bubonic plague and the quarantines introduced in Italy as a preventive measure, up to the present day, outbreaks have taken a toll in human lives, but also in dwindling economic activity, leaving also social consequences behind. There is the argument that the middle age plague led to redefine the labour rules in the then Europe.

The world financial and economic crisis in 2008–2009 pushed decision-makers towards strengthening the banking sector. Today's crisis will certainly push societies to improve health-sector standards and accelerate the use of digital solutions. Additionally, efforts are needed to build the resilience of societies and economic systems, particularly in countries that are exposed to external shocks that are beyond their control.

Sustainability.

Moreover, in the decade ahead of us, human society will face the consequences of climate change and further mitigation efforts. Given the set of circumstances, in 2020 GHG emissions globally will be significantly lower than the year before, but there is a risk of resuming the previous trend after the pandemic. Steering a course between the two challenges in the decades to follow will be a trying task for the whole of humanity, and other classic school geostrategic issues will be either secondary or derived from the major one.

That is why a mix of policies that relate to the green transition driven in particular by the developed world is the new opportunity not to miss. Climate action, circular economy, smart solutions, achieving a higher level of resilience, the use of space, less polluted and congested cities, etc lie in the heart of the required global effort. Investing in green growth and digital

transformation brings more benefits in the long run than reverting back to the old ways, and together with diversification of the financial system, strengthening of the education sector, and a reduction of the administrative burden would be ingredients of this recipe that circulate around the quality of human capital.

Aside from the standard security issues, the contemporary ones such as the cyber-security or climate security issues are more and more becoming primary in the practice since they impose the challenges that societies are facing or will face. There is need to further modernize security services and improve critical infrastructure. However, it does not stop there as more can be done across the board could be and involve the private sector as well and raise awareness of the employees, the efficacy and effectiveness of the business systems.

Closely linked to the above said is the role of the new technologies (block-chain, machine learning, AI and so on) which offer unimaginable possibilities for communication and resource management, while on the other hand, their irresponsible usage may reduce social freedoms. Therefore, the responsible and ethical usage of new technologies in order to increase the efficacy of state administration, local administrations, public institutions (culture, education, science, medicine, etc.), public enterprises, and the private business sector, are crucial for the faster sustainable development and strengthening of security.

To that end, it is of crucial interest to further stimulate debates on both on the theoretical and practical level, aiming to create, adopt and implement both public and business sector policies in order to make the place where we live a safer and more secure environment.



The key principles to follow would include:

Inclusiveness

Horizontal – working with the public sector, other NGOs and think tanks and last but definitely not least the private sector.

Vertical – remain focused on human rights, development, gender empowerment and the voice of the youth.

Engagement

Commitment to debate and dialogue, including emphasis on the concept of mediation in the troubled regions, should be brought to the next level.

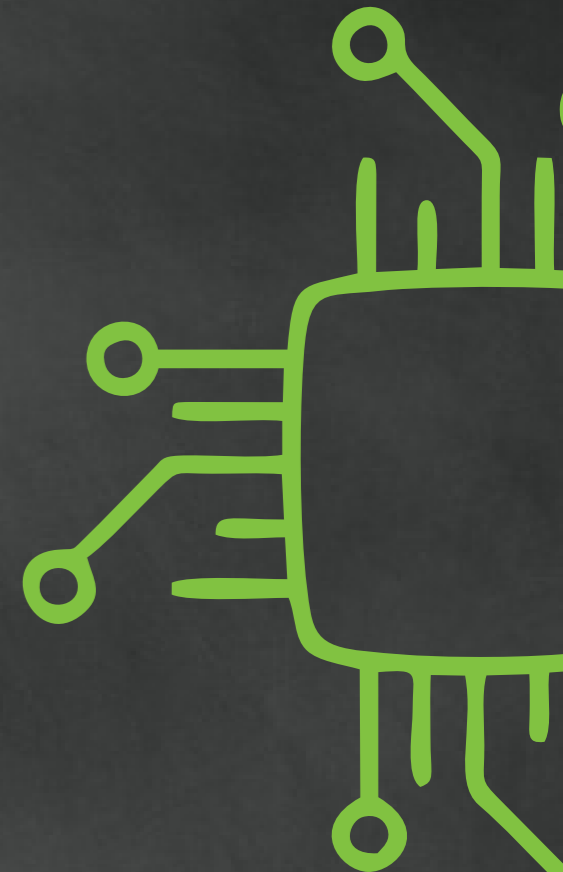
Forward looking and transparent

Living in an age of uncertainty means promoting leadership and out-of-box solutions, cutting edge technology and innovation.

There are different ways to do it. Here are only some.

- to support academic research and analyses in the field of security, digital technologies and innovations as well as sustainable development, in order to contribute to the creation and implementation of both public and business sector policies;
- to raise awareness of the need for a discussion and addressing of the matter and problems, both between professionals and in the public, creating a prominent tie between the academic world, the public, and the international political practice;
- to hold targeted and tailor-made events and activities, including conferences, panel discussions, round tables, workshops, training, and lectures in order to spread the relevant results and findings of the implemented research and analysis

The COVID-19 crisis has revealed many underlying aspects of our society that are currently being examined. Is it already an eye opener, or we are just waiting to get back to pre-Covid19 times as soon as possible? Maybe, but it is highly unrealistic expectation. Pressing issues interconnecting security and sustainable development abound, while at the same time digital transformation eats the slackers manoeuvring space away. Higher level of proactivity and innovation will be required if we are to bring the human civilization to the next level.



Digitality.

Dr Igor Luksic

Prime Minister of Montenegro 2010-2012

THE IMPORTANCE OF RESILIENT INSTITUTIONS

There is an increasingly ominous sense of the fragility of the world today. Whether we look at the state of human rights, society, politics, economics or health, there is a foreboding that things are just not moving in the right direction.

This fragility has been exacerbated by the economic and social ramifications of COVID, particularly on the most vulnerable elements of society. But it is also due to increasing polarization between and within countries. We perceive growing disillusion with democracy, and a turn away from freedom in search of authoritarian solutions, a preference for order over the insecurity that has resulted from so much change, globalization, and the effect of the internet and social media.

Two studies of American society illustrate these phenomena.

In one, researchers at the University of Chicago looked at increasing polarization within the US and noted that, while 50 years ago political ideology could be modelled by a curve, where most people were in a hump in the middle, and then moving down on each side were smaller numbers of those considered extreme left or right. Now researchers see two curves, one on the left and one on the right, with few people in the middle, and little understanding or communication between the two outlooks.

Another study done by social scientists shows that approximately 18% of Americans are highly disposed to authoritarianism, while another 23% are just one step below the authoritarianism scale. Thus roughly 40% of Americans tend to favor authority, obedience and uniformity over freedom and diversity.

This polarization has been intentionally fueled by numerous actors in the world, most notably by Russia, which deliberately seeks to sow chaos in both Europe and the United States. Though weak economically and socially, the Russian Federation remains relevant because of its determination to use any and all means to undermine stability and institutions in western nations.

If you look at the hotspots in the world today – in Ukraine, in Syria, in Venezuela and elsewhere, you always see Russian involvement. The Kremlin is not averse to using violence and war because it knows through experience that the world community is too divided and self-absorbed to care. Instead of reacting resolutely, western governments constantly seek a reset, a common ground.

Further, the Putin regime has used the riches gained through state corruption to buy the political elite across Europe. We just need to look at the Nordstream 2 pipeline to witness European leaders going against their countries' national security interests for the sake of personal and business gain.

Obviously, war and economic warfare count as massive violations of human rights, but there is another human rights issue that has become a major challenge to societies today, and that is the rapid spread of disinformation and propaganda through social media and communications platforms. Information is used as a weapon. False information imperils human rights guaranteed to us by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in various ways.

First, disinformation endangers democracy itself, because it undermines free and fair elections. People need to hear truth about candidates' positions, but instead they are barraged with lies, and then they fall into information silos that only reinforce their misconceptions. This leads to populism and radicalization, which we have seen evidenced in the US, Hungary, Brazil and elsewhere.

Research done at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology discovered that falsehoods are 70% more likely to be retweeted on Twitter than facts, and true news stories take up to six times longer to reach people.

Second, disinformation endangers our health. Since the pandemic started, there have been massive campaigns against vaccines, lock-downs, and masks, and in favor of untested treatments. Indeed, studies show that 40% of health news shared online is fake.

Third, fake news violates our right to non-discrimination. Propaganda often falsely blames certain groups in society, whether they be migrants, racial or ethnic groups, for society's problems.

Those spreading disinformation have often hidden behind the claim of “free speech”. However, the world is becoming increasingly aware of the difference between free speech and the fake news that undermines national security and democracy.

So, how do we deal with this fragility? We must strive to create greater resilience.

First, we need to strengthen institutions – election processes, rule of law, fair media -- within countries.

This is particularly true of the US, which for decades had been the example of freedom, peaceful transition through fair elections, and strong institutions, that had inspired millions around the world. The US must regain the moral authority it once had – its greatest power was not its economic or military might, but its values, principles, and example.

The second way to build resilience is to strengthen international cooperation, unity, and alliances.

The free, democratic nations of the world need to stop reacting unilaterally and weakly to dictators and aggression, and instead formulate a strong strategy to promote freedom and democracy around the globe, support allies, and to counter strongly all attempts to undermine freedom.

Some have suggested calling for an international summit of democracies, which would not only issue statements, but actually devise and implement large projects to tackle such important issues as preventing states from changing borders by force, and dealing decisively and multilaterally with those who have already; stopping the huge flows of illicit money and corruption; cyber-security; regulating the internet by coming together to ensure effective data protection, transparency, and independent fact-checking; promoting human rights and liberties; and addressing increasingly ominous environmental and health concerns.

In summary, our world has become too fragile, and we must respond by coming together to build resilient institutions within and between countries to protect freedom, human rights, our health and our environment.

Kateryna Yushchenko
First Lady of Ukraine 2005-2010



" The Pandemic and the SDGs "

If the Pandemic has confirmed the interdependence of the world's population, it also reminded us that the only lasting responses to Sustainable Development Goals depend on our global cooperation.

As the United Nations' Secretary-General Guterres mentioned last summer: "We need to turn the recovery into a real opportunity to do things right for the future. The pandemic is an unprecedented wake-up call, laying bare deep inequalities, and exposing precisely the failures that are addressed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".

Indeed, time has come for a great change, for a systemic shift to a more sustainable economy working for the people and the planet.

For all its tragedies, the Covid-19 Pandemic has accelerated every economic and social transformations which were happening before the crisis. That is the reinvention of local value chains, the relationship to work, and the digital transition.

It has also brought out a structuring trait for the "World of Tomorrow", which is the collaborative reflex, at all levels of society. In Europe, where I am mostly based, cooperation took precedence over competition between business leaders. Large groups have rotated their production equipment in a few weeks in order to reach national priorities. Innovation has gained ground everywhere.

To support the recovery on the basis of resilient and sustainable Economies, this collaborative impetus needs to be further consolidated, and made consistent with private initiatives, between large groups and SMEs, and with the help of public authorities.

But the Covid-19 Pandemic has also reshuffled cards towards a more regionalized globalization.



Business leaders are more than ever expected to reinvest locally, which will constitute a strategic step into the economic, social and environmental resolution of this crisis. Large groups have already started to invest into regions, creating more value for local ecosystems. In this equation, SMEs are fully legitimate to commit themselves in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. They will be the key to "do things right for the future", as rightly stated by Secretary-General Guterres. To break the economic and ecological deadlocks, local initiatives must go "Global". Large groups and SMES need to build more bridges with the support of their Governments. Regional and supranational should go "hand in hand".

We are indeed entering a decisive decade, that of a societal and environmental explosion. Business and economic players, in particular, are placed on the front line of those challenges. This constitutes an unprecedented opportunity to reorganize our economies, but only if we are able to overcome several pitfalls.

The first would be that of the political agenda: the reconstruction of our production models – based on more sustainability – cannot be confined to electoral horizons.

The second – related – would be that of economic short-termism. The legitimate need to have taken all precautions necessary to contain the Pandemic and the gradual recovery of a fragile economy must not make us forget about reshaping our future, even less to prepare it.

The third pitfalls, finally, would be mistrust and gloom, as we are entering an era of uncertainty.

Our state of mind will therefore be decisive. It will be the Public and Private Leaders' responsibility to have the courage to think long-term, to instill optimism and serenity, to make this global crisis a unique opportunity to transform our economy and our operating models, to achieve more sustainability.

Let's not forget that potential growth has been decreasing. That, as the world production and trade fell in 2020, it will take several years to regain sustainable growth. That, sometimes, in addition to the economic damages, global governance has weakened in favor of galloping national withdrawals.



The Generation Equality Forum: a global inflection point for gender equality



As we move towards this year's Generation Equality Forum, which will kick off in Mexico at the end of this month and close in Paris in June, we must ensure that every step we take towards a transformational recovery from COVID-19 takes full consideration of the rights of women and girls.

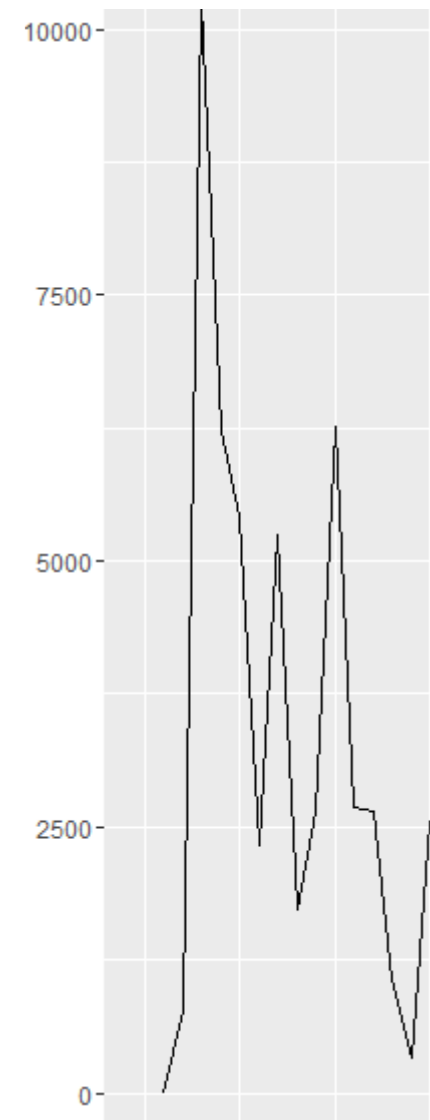
Allow me to be frank: twenty-five years since the landmark Declaration and Platform for Action of the Beijing Conference on Women, the world continues to face an egregious divide between the rights and opportunities afforded to men and boys, and those afforded to women and girls.

The arithmetics of gender inequality is the norm, women earn less, have less access to education, are overrepresented in underpaid or unpaid care economy, as victims of violence in all its forms. They are however, underrepresented in positions of power, in government, in cabinets, in parliaments, in high level positions in the private sector.

While there has been progress across the board – the election of Kamala Harris as VP of the United States was widely welcomed – these developments are sporadic and inconsistent. For many in the poorest and most vulnerable regions, a 'generation equality' is still far, far out of reach, a fact that has only been underscored by the global pandemic, which has only widened the divide further.

According to a study conducted by BMJ Global Health, 85 percent of decision-making during the pandemic, as well as membership in global advisory bodies, has been undertaken by men. This, despite the fact that the pandemic, both socially and economically, has disproportionately affected women and girls. As governments around the world have moved to curb the spread of COVID-19 through lockdowns and reduced economic activities, women, who make up 90 per cent of the informal economy, were hit hardest. Beyond economic hardship, a recent study by UN Women found that violence against women, particularly intimate partner violence, has increased exponentially as a result of lockdowns, creating a 'shadow pandemic' that will have far reaching impacts.

It is essential to recognize the gendered dimension of the pandemic and create national, regional and global gender-balanced recovery plans, and seriously address the implementation deficit in women's right in international and domestic law and policy.



More broadly, the structural overhaul of our economic models must be based on new dynamics:

- Integrating environmental and social criteria, into performance evaluation;
- Adopting collaborative approaches by bringing together the private sector, the public authorities and the civil society;
- Strengthening the dialogue between large groups and SMEs;

Finally, we need to target impactful innovation while learning all the lessons our startups have been teaching us during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Indeed, when it comes to current challenges, no State, however powerful it might be, can imagine acting alone. Initiatives must be structured, and coordinated at a large scale.

None of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals will be achieved without involving the Civil Society. No sustainable growth is possible without the full commitment of the Private sector.

It is only by bringing together all stakeholders that we will help build a sustainable future, in line with the United Nations agenda.

More than ever, the future of our Planet relies on those strategic coalitions between the States, the Civil society, and the Private sector – not only at a global scale, but at a regional scale.

Nathalie de Gaulle

Co-founder and Partner at SOCIETER
Co-founder and Chairwoman at NB-INOV

Pandemic will secure China's global leadership status.

Qualitative and quantitative analysis.

Editor's note: Djoomart Otorbaev is the former Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic, a distinguished professor of the Belt and Road School of Beijing Normal University, and a member of Nizami Ganjavi International Center. The article reflects the author's views, and not necessarily those of CGTN.

The pandemic boldly exposed the quality of various countries' state institutions, clearly outlined the existing problems in relations between the state and the citizen, revealed the effectiveness of state systems in protecting the basic of all human rights - the right to a healthy life.

The two leading world powers, the United States and China, are known to practice fundamentally different models of government. The whole world is convinced now which of these systems is more effective in fighting against the global disease.

Let us compare the number of cases and the number of deaths, the impact of the epidemic on countries' economies, and living standards changes. In one of them, we see severe success. In the other - a catastrophic failure. The US proved to be unable to protect its population from the pandemic. State institutions have failed to fulfill their essential functions, and there has been a collapse of the world's most advanced healthcare system. The economy is in a severe crisis. Millions of jobs have been lost, thousands of businesses have been closed. The population is intimidated, people are in a panic. The standard of living of the people, especially the poor, has plummeted and continues to decline.

In China, namely, the state institutions have assumed the leadership and responsibility for protecting their citizens' fundamental rights. The main sectors of the economy and business activities quickly recovered. The state has effectively ensured fundamental human rights - the right to health and worthy life. Despite unprecedented difficulties, it was last year that China announced a complete victory over poverty.

Now let us turn to few numbers that further support that qualitative analysis. The Chinese economy will overtake the US' five years earlier due to the pandemic, experts from the British Center for Economics & Business Research (CEBR) concluded last month [<https://cebr.com/reports/china-daily-lead-story-nation-set-to-be-largest-economy-in-2028/>]. According to their calculations, China will become the world's largest economy already in 2028. A year ago, CEBR believed that China would overtake the US five years later, in 2033.

"The COVID-19 pandemic and the corresponding economic consequences have tilted the rivalry in China's favor," the researchers emphasize. According to CEBR, China's "skillful management of the pandemic with strict early isolation" with "blows to long-term growth in the West" has improved China's relative economic performance.

As a first step, women must be brought into the fold when it comes to recovery from COVID-19. As it is, the lack of gender parity in COVID-19 task forces and political decision-making processes not only heightens societal biases and gender stereotyping around leadership but also undermines an effective and all-inclusive response to COVID-19. We cannot continue to exclude half of the world population if we hope to build a new, sustainable, post-pandemic future.

This issue is only an extension of the challenges women already face when it comes to leadership and participation. Today, women account for less than a quarter of all elected politicians in the world. Women serve as Heads of State or Government in only 21 out of 193 countries and represent only 21 percent of ministers in government cabinets. The 2030 Agenda fully acknowledges this issue and advocates for "women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life". The onus is thus on governments – at all levels – as well as the international system to make concrete efforts to close this divide. Beginning with recovery from COVID-19 is a clear first step.

In addition to women's leadership and participation, recovery from the pandemic can also be used to usher in other gender empowering elements. As it is, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted key vulnerabilities in our societies, economies and political systems. The recovery plan for a post COVID-19 world should be to build inclusive and resilient societies that center around people and the planet. Returning to the 'business as usual' economic model that prioritizes short-term economic growth at the expense of human and environmental justice, cannot be the way forward. Applying a gender lens to COVID-19 response, recovery and prevention efforts can serve to integrate gender concerns into a myriad of areas to support gender equal and inclusive recovery. This can range from the creation of economic stimulus packages that recognize unpaid care work to prioritizing social protection and security for violence against women and girls. The Generation Equality Forum, convened by UN Women and co-hosted by the governments of Mexico and France, is a golden opportunity to refuel international commitments to accelerate progress towards gender equality. Bringing together governments, civil society organizations and the philanthropic and private sector, the Forum will give advocates across the globe the platform to foster a set of strategic and transformative change to renew movements, policy and action for gender equality and fulfill the commitments to guarantee the enjoyment of all human rights and wellbeing for all women and girls.



Twenty-five years since Beijing, the best way to honor the principles and aspirations of the Declaration and Platform for Action would be to use this moment in time to change course and to implement bold actions that close the gap for women and girls. The Forum will be a major inflection point: a once-in-a-decade opportunity to advance women's rights and tackle the gender inequality crisis.

With the right political will and vision, we the active engagement of all sectors and all generations we can recover better, with a world that is more sustainable, fair and free of violence, poverty and inequalities.

Maria Fernanda Espinosa

President of the 73rd UN General Assembly 2018-2019

According to China's State Statistical Office data, in 2020 country's gross domestic product grew by 2.3%. "China's GDP growth is likely to rise to 8.2% in 2021, and domestic consumption will free up additional strength to support growth," investment bank UBS predicts. At the same time, by the end of 2020, the US' GDP will decrease by 2.4% and grow by 4.2% in 2021.

Other significant events are taking place in the rest of the world. Countries that have chosen a robust state model, such as Vietnam or Singapore, are also making significant progress in their economic development and the fight against the pandemic. The countries that practice similar to the American liberal development model, as a rule, fail to protect their citizens' health and develop their economies - the most striking example is the United Kingdom. Observing such instances, many of the "third world" countries question the "liberal model of capitalism" demonstrated by the US and UK as the most successful.

Fundamental changes are taking place in many areas of the economy and everyday life. Without commenting on all spheres of the economy, consider, for example, the field of air transportation.

The world's top four most connected cities now are Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, and Chengdu. Such former "champions" in air traffic connectivity as New York (-66% fall of traffic), London (-67%), Tokyo (-65%), Bangkok (-81%), and Seoul (-69%) have all exited the top ten.

International Air Transport Association (IATA) says the pandemic has "undone a century of progress" for connectivity between cities, critical for trade, tourism, investment, and economies. IATA estimates that 46 million jobs supported by air transport are currently in peril.

How can air transportation be restored as quickly as possible, even during a pandemic? China offers its model, which has proven itself well on domestic routes. During the G20 meeting in November 2020, President Xi Jinping has called for a "global mechanism" that would use QR codes to open international travel. "We need to harmonize policies and standards further and establish 'fast tracks' to facilitate the orderly flow of people," he said.

Humanity will likely live with a pandemic for many more years, and maybe this disease will remain with us forever. The world can and should heed China's experience both in effectively combating the pandemic and the country's development in the face of the ever-present threat posed by the disease.

Djoomart Otorbaev

Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan 2014-2015



THE WESTERN BALKAN : AN OVERVIEW



When analyzing the Balkan, especially the peninsula's western part, we shall always bear in mind the quote often referred to a great political thinker and a former British prime minister Winston Churchill. Reportedly, he once said that the Balkan produces more history than it can contain. Indeed, he did not make a mistake describing the region, and its modern history supported his case. Unfortunately, the recent Balkan history left profound consequences to this part of Europe still to be solved.

There is almost no corner on the planet that did not have the Balkan as a synonym for conflict, which is not strange considering that five wars were fought in this area, and one of which, The First World War, even started in the Balkan. The last war clashes at the very end of the 20th century resulted in the bloody disintegration of former Yugoslavia, with the NATO military intervention due to Kosovo's events as its finale. These tragic events took tens of thousands of innocent human lives, hundreds of thousands displaced, and caused enormous material damage. We must always remember these victims with the greatest honor. They are still whispering that political leaders must never again use war as a tool to solve ideological, religious, cultural, historical, or national differences.

Instead of using differences between peoples of Balkan as a common good, they became the primary source of "Balkan tragedies." But these internal differences were not the only cause of tragedies on the peninsula; nevertheless, the Western Balkan's geopolitical and geostrategic values have also had a big part in these historical events. For ages, this area was a crossroads for different civilizations, empires, and religions, a vital link and a hub between the Western and Eastern World, Christianity and Islam, Europe and Asia. In recent history, it was a buffer zone between NATO and the former Warsaw Pact. Nowadays, it represents a sphere of interest for the European Union and Russia, and even Turkey and PR China. Great global powers have always non-vocally mutually acknowledged the Western Balkan as a field of most significant importance to fulfill their interests, regardless of who they were and how far. On the other side, Western Balkan countries recently agreed to choose a shared future for the very first time in their history. This consensus resulted from war activities from the 1990s and lessons learned, and implied dedication towards values similar to those in the Western democracies, striving to the EU's membership.

Peace, equality, freedom, multiculturalism, political pluralism, the rule of law, strong economic cooperation, and quality administrative capacities, a reliable business environment, and professional government in citizens' interest are some of the fundamental values of the EU. Indeed, the EU is de facto *In varietate concordia*, something the Western Balkan should aim towards, having in mind numerous historical, demographical, cultural, religious, and other differences on this small portion of the world. Furthermore, one should not forget that the situation which Europe enjoys nowadays was just a dream only 70 years ago. After centuries of clashes and wars, the EU's founding fathers reached an agreement to primarily keep the long-lasting peace on the continent once and for all.

The EU successfully fulfilled this goal, and parallel to this was building sustainable preconditions for the member countries' welfare and prosperity. But to be an entirely successful project, the EU is missing one, might be the most crucial part – the Western Balkan. As a sui generis organization on the European continent, the EU cannot be entirely successful without including the Western Balkan, nor does the Western Balkan be thoroughly prosperous and stable without EU membership.

All six Western Balkan countries started with their integration processes, aiming to become a part of the EU. This path is not viewed only as a one-way street that can hit a dead-end lot of time, but rather a process of conversation, coordination, and exchange of information between the Western Balkan countries, the EU institutions, and member states. Finally, the goal is not just to become a member and be a part of the EU, but also to adopt EU values and standards.

This challenging path of Europeanisation of the Western Balkan aims to three directions. How successful is the journey depends solely on the candidate states individually, i.e., their political leadership, individual achievements, and measurable results.

The first direction is individual membership negotiations with the EU institutions, contained in negotiations chapters, including all the areas of action of the EU. The negotiation's goal is to align every candidate state's internal values and standards with the EU criteria. Currently, Montenegro is the process leader, with all the negotiation chapters opened and three of them temporarily closed. Serbia has opened 16 negotiation chapters, with two temporarily closed. On the other side, Albania and North Macedonia are patiently waiting for the "green light" from the EU member states to eventually start with the accession talks. Bosnia and Hercegovina took essential steps to get the candidate status, and Kosovo is continuously showing evident readiness for further European integration.

The second direction exemplifies cooperation among Western Balkan countries within already established regional initiatives and bodies. Doing this, they provide a substantial contribution in better understanding, simultaneously developing state capacities for EU membership through regional cooperation. Initiatives such as the Berlin Process, the South-Eastern Europe Cooperation Process with the Regional Cooperation Council as its secretariat, and CEFTA gave a colossal stimulus to Western Balkan development. Besides this, concrete mechanisms for cooperation in various fields such as Western Balkan Energy and Transport Community, Western Balkan Fund, Regional Youth Cooperation Office are also established. One shall note that no Western Balkan state will accept these mechanisms and organizations as a substitute for their EU membership. They instead use them as a useful platform for synchronizing their standards with the EU's ones before they get the membership.

The third and equally important direction is a traditional diplomatic tool used in inter-state relations – bilateral dialogue within the sole Western Balkan countries. Through the bilateral dialogue, it is possible to achieve results acceptable for both sides, especially in negotiations related to sensitive, open inter-state issues. In recent years, Western Balkan countries have shown that they can solve outstanding matters between themselves. That was when Montenegro negotiated and reached an agreement with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo on state borders. The same case was when North Macedonia signed the Prespa Agreement with Greece. To get to these results and deals, a lot of hard work, dedication, and time were necessary, including mutual respect, understanding, and openness between the parties. Unfortunately, the recent period brought us the slow down of the European integration of the region and the consequentially slower Europeanization process of the Western Balkan. The problems such as the migration crisis and Brexit deeply affected the EU, as never as in its short history. Like that wasn't enough, just before everyone thought the crisis is finally coming to an end, the EU, as the whole world, faced the greatest one in the modern history of humanity – the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the meantime, faced with such challenges and being pressed continuously by member states' political interests, the EU changed accession negotiation process methodology. A couple of member states also blocked the anticipated opening of the negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia. This passive approach by the EU is probably unsuitable in Western Balkan states' eyes since they do not think that the EU's internal challenges shall not be a reason for suspending its enlargement. The EU's passive approach towards enlargement in the region does not contribute to the Western Balkan countries' stability and development. It leaves a small gap for other subjects and their interests, which does not share the same values and principles with the EU. That is why the EU shall take urgent steps to prevent further growth of these interests and powers, which will benefit both the EU and Western Balkan. On the other side, the Western Balkan must stand by declared values of democracy, pluralism, and the rule of law. Consequently, this is the only right way for the Western Balkan to prosper and be a part of contemporary Europe. It strives for where geographically, historically, and culturally already belong.

Filip Vujanovic

President of Montenegro 2003-2018



THE WESTERN BALKAN

Western Balkans: European Integration



The public of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also the Western Balkans as a whole, was intrigued by Germany's announcement that it wanted its former Minister of Agriculture Christian Schmidt to take over the post of High Representative in B&H. The Dayton Peace Agreement envisages the existence of the Office of the High Representative, which should supervise the implementation of the civilian aspect of the agreement. This duty has been performed for the last twelve years and is still performed by Mr. Valentin Inzko, an Austrian diplomat.

The reasons for his very extended stay in B&H, uncharacteristic of ordinary international missions, are numerous. One of the reasons is connected with the political concept that developed in the international community and which considered that ownership over processes in B&H should be taken over by local politicians and that the international community embodied in the High Representative should withdraw from direct management of the country. This was followed by the concept that the European Union should play a key role in B&H, given the expressed will of political structures that B&H wants to become part of the European Union. It was believed that in such circumstances, the closure of the Office of the High Representative was inevitable and that Valentin Inzko would be the last High Representative, so no one even thought about his successor.

However, as is often the case in B&H, it turned out that what was planned did not materialize. The political elites in B&H have not shown a real readiness and desire to take responsibility and lead the country in a positive direction. For them, the critical goal was re-election, which meant a populist and pronounced nationalist vocabulary that, instead of compromise and common politics, led to political conflicts and complete blockages in the decision-making process, especially in the last two years. On the other hand, the European Union has not shown much enthusiasm to truly take on the leadership role of the international community in B&H. The reasons are numerous and can be found in Brexit, significant internal turbulence, the fact that there is a negative attitude about enlargement, the COVID pandemic, etc. In such conditions, B&H could not be an important topic for the EU. All this unplannedly extended Inzko's stay in the country and it seemed that he would remain in that position indefinitely.

However, in January this year, Germany officially confirmed Schmidt's candidacy, introducing new elements into the political situation in B&H. Two questions arise - whether the candidate will receive support and be appointed, and if that happens, what will be the key strategy of the High Representative in the next four years.

The appointment is still uncertain, as key actors within the Peace Implementation Council (a body that is a kind of supervisor to the High Representative) have not yet given clear support to the election. So far, neither the USA, the UK, nor the EU has done that. There is still no position of countries with a significant regional influence in B&H, such as Turkey, Serbia, and Croatia. The first information said that Russia would not support the election but would tolerate it, but after the outbreak of the crisis around Navalny, Russia made clear that it was against it. Thus, the appointment of the new High Representative is still uncertain and will last a lengthy battle in the diplomatic circles over this appointment, and at this moment, nobody can predict what the outcome of this battle will be.

One thing is for sure, though. The Office of the High Representative will survive in B&H for another while and will not be shut down any time soon. In that sense, the question arises about the priority of international institutions in B&H with the old or new representative. Here, too, two possible approaches are being developed: one that implies a more active role of the OHR to the extent that it even tries to define a new B&H Constitution, and the other that opts for a more pragmatic approach to reforms and using BiH's EU rapprochement as a method of reform in BiH.

We consider the first approach, which implies substantial changes in the organization of B&H, completely unrealistic. There are two ways in which the B&H Constitution could be changed.

One is for local actors to agree on that. If the topic of the new organization of B&H is opened, three completely different concepts of B&H will immediately appear on the scene. The dominant Bosniak parties lead one, and that is B&H without entities and with maximum centralization of the country. Another approach of most Serb parties that would advocate for the disintegration of B&H and the emergence of an independent Republika Srpska. Croatian parties would most likely seek the formation of a third entity with a Croat majority. These are such opposing approaches that it is entirely unrealistic to expect any agreement on a new, different Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Another way of creating a new Constitution and a different arrangement of B&H from today's (whatever that means) is a new international conference on BiH. Realistically speaking, there are much more severe issues in the world of today (Syria, the Caucasus, Iraq, and in Afghanistan, Yemen, etc.), but still, there are no international conferences on these hot spots. I am convinced that there is no agreement between the vital international factors on the new conference on B&H. Even if it would happen, we do not see any chance that the same actors who 25 years ago reached an agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina in Dayton, can now achieve, in the much different and less favorable geostrategic environment, a new agreement on conceptually different B&H.

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Believing that in the current circumstances - the USA, Russia, and the EU could agree on anything, and especially on B&H, and that this agreement would be supported by Turkey, Croatia and Serbia due to regional interests, seems even more unrealistic than domestic actors agreeing.

We are far closer to believe that the new / old High Representative will be increasingly influenced by the EU and that through the conditions for B&H's rapprochement with the EU, it will seek to reform B&H to a certain extent. It is not realistic to expect substantial reforms in the organization of B&H, but it is realistic to expect more willingness to compromise in policies. Especially if the EU takes a more sincere attitude towards the entire Western Balkans and abandons the impersonal and unprecedented bureaucratic policy towards B&H as it has led for the last decade. One of the key factors must be the fight against corruption, which has not been the case so far, and even international representatives have tolerated and worked with corrupt politicians. If the fight against corruption becomes a common goal of citizens and international representatives, it could "unite" B&H more than any violent and unnatural attempt through changes to the Constitution and the Dayton Agreement.

Mladen Ivanic

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Member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2014-2018

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Managing Editor: Rovshan Muradov

Editor: Ilaha Ibrahimli

Graphic Designer: Ilaha Abbaszade

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