

# FROM SARAJEVO, 1914 TO SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE, 2014: WARS, TRANSITIONS AND CONTROVERSIES

## *EVENT SUMMARY*

On October 15, 2014, the Wilson Center's Global Europe Program hosted **John R. Lampe**, senior scholar at the Wilson Center and Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Maryland. At the event, Mr. Lampe introduced his newest book *Balkans into Southeastern Europe, 1914-2014, A Century of War and Transition* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), which focuses on the last century and its impacts on the region. Lampe was also joined by **Vladimir Tismaneanu**, Professor of Comparative Politics at the University of Maryland. The conversation and subsequent question and answer session were moderated by **Martin Sletzinger**, Senior Scholar at the Wilson Center.

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In his introduction, Sletzinger noted that tensions are still very much alive in Southeastern Europe, as evidenced by a recent provocation at a Serbia-Albania soccer match. He commented that the lesson to learn is that the journey is hardly complete for the countries of the region, and for the West as well. As the Balkans states continue to work towards a better future, the West should not disengage.

The first edition of *Balkans into Southeastern Europe, A Century of War and Transition*—published in 2006—was inspired by the culmination of the Yugoslav conflict. The second edition—published earlier this year, almost a decade later—has been revised, updated, and expanded to include coverage of the latest scholarship and recent events. Despite the end of the violence, said Lampe, the region continues to endure limitations that persist from a century of conflict. War memories and ethnic tensions remain engrained in peoples' minds. Especially in the wake of the economic crisis of the late 2000s, the region has been plagued with economic hardships; it faced the challenges of current account balancing, lack of foreign direct investment, and unemployment. The biggest challenge lies in political reform; despite the pervasive problems of state weakness, corruption, and patronage, change has been slow in this area. But, Lampe added, there is hope. In the younger generation, there is a strong desire to distance oneself from ethnic identification and historical memories. The growth of civil society through the proliferation of NGOs signals an aspiration for progress. And the prospect of EU integration continues to inspire change. Lampe stressed the importance of continuing to support development in the region during this pivotal period.

In his commentary, Tismaneanu echoed these sentiments, emphasizing the transience of political arrangements in a region characterized by wounded dignity, ethnic tension, limited democracy, and illiberal capitalism. He left us pondering these questions on the future of Southeastern Europe: How do we make democracy work? Does liberal nationalism have a

future in these countries? How can Balkan countries come to terms with their historical memories? What is the rule of leaders in democracy building?

With comments from Lampe and Tismaneanu, *From Sarajevo, 1914 to Southeastern Europe, 2014: Wars, Transitions and Controversies* provided a history of the Balkans, analyzed the effects that history has had on present day Southeastern Europe, and raised questions about the future of the region.