



EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES

Helping to bridge the gap between the scholarly and policy worlds, here and throughout the disparate countries of the region.

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EES NEWS

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2008

Greece, the Western Balkans and the European Union

The Wilson Center's East European Studies program, in cooperation with the American College of Thessaloniki, the University division of Anatolia College, held a workshop November 30-December 1, 2007, which aimed at trouble-shooting the complex process of European integration of the Western Balkans. This meeting was sponsored by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation. Discussions built upon the dual premise that EU accession holds the best hope for overcoming stagnation in the Western Balkans and that the traditional enlargement process is not working in the region. The US, the EU and neighboring countries, such as Greece, certainly have much to contribute in reinvigorating this process, and coordinating their policies seems to be of paramount importance.

The policy to integrate the Western Balkans into Euro-Atlantic structures has been heralded as the strongest link in the Transatlantic Partnership, since both the United States and the European Union agree that European integration is the best hope for sustaining peace and developing democracy and prosperity in the Western Balkans. This policy is seen as reasonable and beneficial by all sides. The recent successful integration of 10 postcommunist member states is perceived as proof that the EU is better able than any other international entity to stabilize and democratize the Western Balkans. Indeed, no single state or international institution has had as great an impact on domestic change as the EU has had in postcommunist Europe. At the same time, the EU is eager to overcome its limitations in the realm of common foreign policy. To date, enlargement has been the most successful of its Common Foreign and Security Policy initiatives and the evidence offered by countries such as Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania (which had initially lagged behind other countries that were included in the 2004 and 2007 waves of enlargement) proves that success is possible even when there are severe economic and political obstacles to overcome.

Whatever the merits of the policy, the fact is that since the EU made its commitment to enlarge to the Western Balkans at the 2003 Thessaloniki Council, the countries have made very little progress towards adopting the necessary reforms despite their aspirations to become member states. The reasons for the slow pace of reform are many and include the increased urgency of the US withdrawal from the Western Balkans; the EU's so-called "enlargement fatigue"; and the limited capacity of the EU enlargement strategy to address problems of democratic consolidation, minority rights and civil society development. Moreover, given the differences between Central Europe and the Western Balkans, European integration will work very differently in the latter than it had in previous enlargements. As post-conflict states, the countries of the former Yugoslavia must contend with unique problems, not least of which revolve around questions of state sovereignty. And given the recent history of inter-ethnic violence, many of the issues facing the Western Balkans cannot be addressed without international support. In order to keep the region on track in building democracy and market economies, the EU, NATO and the United States will need to come up with new, complex strategies for how to integrate the region.

While it seems clear that the Western Balkans have made little progress towards meeting their EU accession obligations, the immense complexity of the process makes it difficult to immediately understand why this is the case. As mentioned above, many factors influence the process. By identifying and exploring some of these factors, workshop participants laid the foundation for finding ways to address these problems by adopting new policies for the Western Balkans.

Panel I: Failures of Conditionality

ACT president **Richard Jackson** graciously opened the meeting. The first panel, chaired by **Nida Gelazis** of the Woodrow Wilson Center, addressed the failures of conditionality in the

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Western Balkans. The mechanism of conditionality is fairly straightforward: the EU offers membership to a state on the condition that it has a consolidated democracy, protects minority rights, has a functioning market economy and adopts the *acquis communautaire* into its legal system. Conditionality puts the responsibility on the applicant country to adopt the long list of reforms that the Commission requires. Therefore, for conditionality to work, the applicant country must be deeply committed to the idea of becoming a member state. By studying the experience of Central and Eastern Europe with EU accession, **Othon Anastasakis** of Oxford University suggested four

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supporting factors that enabled the conditionality tool to work. First, the EU presented a series of intermediate rewards to prove its commitment to enlargement. Second, the EU had the ability to monitor and evaluate the candidate countries in their attempts to meet the EU's conditions. Third, there was a deep consensus among political actors in applicant countries supporting the goal of EU membership. Fourth, there was a local administrative and cognitive capacity among the leaders in applicant countries to comply and implement the conditions for accession.

In comparison with the most recent enlargements, Anastasakis contended that the accession of the Western Balkans is complicated by several factors. First, the ability of the EU to credibly commit to further enlargement has been complicated by its inability to reform its own institutions after the recent enlargements, which increased the number of member states from 15 to 27. With nearly double the members, the EU must amend voting and other procedures prior to further enlargements in order to overcome its currently cumbersome structure. While institutional reform is proceeding independently of the enlargement policy, this process is considered by many to contribute to the EU's enlargement fatigue and a dampening of interest in enlargement towards the Western Balkans.

Due to the history of conflict, current regional instability and the fact that many of the countries are still lagging far behind in terms of democratic consolidation and market reforms, the EU is forced to make more requirements of the Western Balkans than it had with many of the Central European and Baltic countries. The EU must also consider how enlargement to one of the

countries might impact the security and stability of the region as a whole. This was certainly not much of a consideration in the past enlargements, in which individual countries were allowed to proceed at their own regatta-like pace towards reforms, each reaching the goal when it was ready and able. While it is reasonable to require more of countries that are less ready for accession, the distance between the EU and the Western Balkans is perceived to be greater, given the greater number of hurdles these countries must make prior to accession.

Simonida Kacarska, from the Secretariat for European Affairs in Skopje, echoed Anastasakis in raising the issue that enlargement fatigue, in addition to the piling on of additional criteria for membership, has been perceived by the countries of the Western Balkans as proof that the EU is not serious about its enlargement pledge. She offered the Commission reports as evidence of the EU's inadequate and inconsistent requirement and evaluation process, which seems to show a growing number of criteria as time passes, rather than progress along a consistent number of priority areas. Both Anastasakis and Kacarska argued that the EU must take an active role in helping the particularly vulnerable region through the accession process by introducing more consistency in their progress assessments and in prescribing detailed solutions and priorities for individual governments. The Commission will need to expand its monitoring and evaluation capacity to create a new strategic capacity, which would enable the EU to be more tactical in prescribing the precise steps these countries should take towards their goal of accession.

In addition to creating multiple thresholds in this process, the EU must also adjust its ability to offer these countries intermediate rewards for progress. Given that the countries of the Western Balkans seem far from EU accession, the carrot of membership is too far removed from the shorter-term political calculations by both politicians and voters in the region. **Elena Jileva**, of the Center for Political and Constitutional Studies in Madrid, offered an elaborated argument and plan for one reward that has been discussed at length: visa facilitation. While the goal of EU accession is not always well understood, the benefit of free movement is understood and desired by almost everyone. In many countries of Central Europe, free movement was seen as the ultimate prize, which enabled governments to adopt painful reforms without severe political repercussions. By tying visa facilitation regimes to specific reforms in the realm of Justice and Home Affairs, the EU could help to spur reforms. While this would not be the visa-free travel enjoyed by EU citizens, facilitated travel would at least allow people to see what life is like beyond their borders, and potentially end the current complacency towards the accession process. If people from the Western Balkans were able to experience the difference between liberal and illiberal

WORKSHOP AGENDA

Panel I: Failures of Conditionality

Chair: **Nida Gelazis**, Woodrow Wilson Center

Othon Anastasakis, University of Oxford, *The Limits to the EU's Conditionality and Leverage in the Western Balkans*

Elena Jileva, Center for Political and Constitutional Studies, Madrid, *The EU's Visa Policy as an Instrument of Conditionality in the Western Balkans*

Simonida Kacarska, Secretariat for European Affairs, Skopje, *The Political Criteria for EU Accession – A Possible Wayforward for the Western Balkans*

Panel II: Foreign Direct Investment and Macro-indicators of Economic Reform

Chair: **Jens Bastian**, European Agency for Reconstruction, Thessaloniki

Julia Gray, University of Pittsburgh, *Deepening Regional Networks as an Alternative to EU Accession*

Sharon Fisher, Global Insight, Washington, *Transforming the Western Balkans through Investments from the New Member States*

Athanasios Vamvakidis, International Monetary Fund, Washington, *The Southeast European Economies in the EU: Opportunities and Risks*

Jean Tesche, Sarajevo Graduate School of Business, *EU Accession and Economic Reform in the Western Balkan States*

Keynote address by **Ambassador Geert-Hinrich Ahrens**

Panel III: Regional Policy

Chair: **Yanis Tsorbatzoglou**, SECI and the American College of Thessaloniki

Christos Nikas, University of Western Macedonia, *Regional Economic Integration and Conflict Resolution in the Western Balkans*

Marko Nikolic, University of Bologna, *Decentralization and Regionalization – Two Steps Closer to the European Union*

Vassilis Monastiriotis, European Institute, London School of Economics, *Quo Vadis Southeast Europe? EU Accession, Regional Cooperation and the need for a Balkan Development Strategy*

Panel IV: Civil Society and Political Criteria

Chair: **Tom Countryman**, US Embassy to Greece

Lenard Cohen, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, *Civil Society and Value Transformation in Western Balkan Democratic Consolidation: From Post-Conflict Struggles to the European Union*

Obrad Kesic, TSM Global Consultants, Washington, *The Divisive and Manipulative Debate over the Linkage between EU and NATO Membership in the Balkans*

Cvete Koneska, Analytica Think Tank, Skopje, *Enlargement's New Policy Tools: Lessons from Introducing Information Society*

Panel V: The Greek Factor

Chair: **Martin Sletzinger**, Woodrow Wilson Center

Stelios Aleifantis, European Public Law Centre, Athens, and **Dimitris Lelovitis**, Center for Conflict Analysis, Foundation for Mediterranean Studies, Athens, *Transformation of Domestic Policies in the Western Balkans through the Partial Adaptation of the EU Legal Acquis: The Energy Community as a Sector-Specific Integration Model*

Irene Kyriakopoulos and **Steve Meyer**, National Defense University, Washington, *The Western Balkans and the European Union: Prospects for Integration*

Athanasios Moulakis, Onassis Foundation Fellow, *Bringing Serbia on Board*

Panel VI: State-Building through EU Accession

Chair: **Marton Benedek**, European Commission

Zrinka Stimac, Friedrich-Schiller University of Jena, *EU Integration and the Educational Sector: Religion in the Public School in Bosnia and Herzegovina*

Constantine Buhayer, University of Westminster, *Charting the Unthinkable: Is the EU Immune from Internal 'Civil Wars'?*

Gulner Aybet (with **Florian Bieber**), University of Kent, *Building a Conditional State: EU and NATO Conditionality as a Tool of External State-Building in Bosnia and Herzegovina*

societies, open and closed markets, public goods and ineffective public services, they may be better able to promote European ideals in the region.

The first panel addressed the concern that EU conditionality is not working in the Western Balkans the same way that it had in Central Europe. In order to restore the EU's soft power, members of the workshop suggested that the Commission combine the use of multiple thresholds in the process towards membership with intermediate rewards that are geared towards helping to convince local populations of the necessity to continue

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the pursuit of difficult reforms. The method of the Commission's evaluation and monitoring process was also identified as an area that could be relatively easily modified, especially by increasing the consistency and clarity of the requirements. Most importantly, it seems clear that given this region's particular problems, the EU and its bilateral and multilateral partners must coordinate their policies and engage the region much more closely to help support their progress towards the EU.

Panel II: Foreign Direct Investment and Macro-Indicators of Economic Reform

Part of the EU's attraction is the possibility of sharing in its sphere of peace and prosperity. All of the new member states from postcommunist Europe have seen dramatic improvements in their economic development, especially in the surge in foreign direct investment prior to accession. In the Western Balkans, where the timing of accession is unclear, people do not have a good sense that these benefits are forthcoming. Moreover, the EU accession process itself does not directly contribute to economic growth, but the adoption of European norms and the promise of belonging in a stable and prosperous EU system combine to create a receptive climate for investment and growth. The second panel of this workshop, chaired by **Jens Bastian** of the European Agency for Reconstruction, discussed ways in which the economic climate of this region could be improved prior to accession.

There was consensus between all of the panelists that there is a clear and very positive relationship between EU accession and economic growth in current member states. Yet, even though the EU has made a clear commitment to enlargement in the Western Balkans, little has changed there. **Julia Gray**, from the University of Pittsburgh, described how the current impasse on the enlargement process has created an

economic environment that is characterized by uncertainty. Because local leaders believe that EU accession is a long way off, they do not implement reforms that would help them move towards Europe and attract foreign investment. As a result, their economies continue to stagnate, causing further unrest and uncertainty in the region, which in turn adds to the skepticism people feel about EU accession.

Gray suggested that the Central European Trade Agreement (CEFTA), which was signed by the countries of the Western Balkans in 2006, creates a framework which the EU could use to help spur reforms at the regional level. In contrast with the experience in Central Europe, the EU should consider addressing CEFTA as the primary institution for the region as a whole to adopt European norms. In this way, European norms could be adopted through regional cooperative initiatives, each country helping the other through the CEFTA process.

At times, the perception in the Western Balkans seems to be that EU accession would enable people to leave their economically-underdeveloped homes for better prospects abroad. This perception focuses attention to the end-game (accession) or visa facilitation rather than on the real prize: local development. The EU accession process challenges states to create "Europe" within their own borders, through the adoption of European norms and through the attraction of investment. **Sharon Fisher**, of Global Insight, offered a unique solution that would both spur investment and convince Western Balkan constituencies of the EU's commitment to the region.

Although it is intended to focus the attention of local leaders to specific policy areas in need of reform, EU criticism of Western Balkan countries is often perceived as proof that the EU is not truly committed to enlargement, but is simply finding excuses to delay their progress. Echoing the first panel, Fisher challenged the EU member states to prove their commitment by getting more closely involved with the region's development, namely, by coordinating investment partnerships between new members from Central Europe and the countries of the Western Balkans. With labor costs increasing in the new member states, the Central European countries could use the .17 percent of GDP that they have pledged to spend on development aid (along with help from the IMF and the World Bank) to invest in moving some of their manufacturing production to the countries of the Western Balkans. Moreover, active cooperation between the new member states and the accession countries will allow for better information exchange regarding the benefits and requirements for EU membership, which may also address the problem of perception of the EU in the region.

In some countries of the Western Balkans (most notably in Serbia, Montenegro and the Republic of Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina) leaders have

begun to question the necessity of the EU, given the high growth rates they have achieved recently independent of the EU. Russian investment, along with the political support the Russian government has offered recently, seems to offer an alternative to the long and tedious EU accession process. In her presentation, Fisher warned that excessive reliance on Russia could lead to market instability, as it has in Moldova and Georgia. Even without the reliance on Russia, **Athanasios Vamvakidis**, of the International Monetary Fund, outlined that the current economic path that has been taken in the region can collapse easily if proper structural reforms are not adopted soon. He asserted that the current growth financed by external borrowing may lead to economic vulnerability. While the region as a whole is inherently attractive to investors, the region has not moved fast enough to make it easy to invest there. Lingering problems include the large role of the state in the economy, labor market inflexibility, bureaucratic red tape and corruption. Vamvakidis noted that although the EU will in some cases help to push reforms in the right direction, the countries themselves will need to take even more ambitious steps to compete successfully within the EU. The sooner the countries of the Western Balkans tackle these reforms, the better.

Jean Tesche, of the Sarajevo Graduate School of Business, reiterated the concern that the countries of the Western Balkans, particularly Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, are not moving fast enough to create functioning and stable market economies. But each country is facing different political challenges to the reform agenda. Her study implies that the EU should not ignore the political issues involved in meeting the economic requirements for accession: problems will only be overcome if the Commission considers the complex whole rather than simply one part at a time. Moreover, the sequence of reform (e.g., institutional reforms must be made before foreign direct investment) is important in the region, and the EU could do more to direct the reform strategies of these countries.

Keynote Speech by Ambassador Geert-Hinrich Ahrens Ahrens, who has dedicated much of his career to the countries of the Western Balkans. In his youth, he witnessed how enmity and desolation in Germany and France was overcome in a relatively short time through cooperation within the European Community, and he hopes to see a similar transformation for the Western Balkan region. He cautioned that the perception that EU accession will bring this transformation in and of itself is false. Indeed, while the international community has attempted to address the many problems in the region through its policies for more than a decade, policies are no substitute to

the healing power of time. Therefore, none of us can afford to lose patience with the pace with which the region undertakes its transformation

Moreover, the EU would endanger itself if it accepts a region in which countries cannot resolve their own problems. It is imperative that the countries of Southeast Europe adopt the standards required for membership. And while the EU has been criticized for not doing enough to specify precisely which laws and reforms it wants from the accession countries, he urged local leaders to have the courage to face their problems in the way that they see fit and according to their own legal culture. After all, they understand better than anyone what is going on in their own countries.

Panel III: Regional Policy

As stated above, the EU has introduced new conditions for the Western Balkans. In addition to general requirements for regional and local government reform, the effect of enlargement on the Western Balkan region as a whole will also be taken into consideration by the EU. As a result, regional cooperation and coordination between states is a higher priority than it had been in previous enlargements. **Yanis Tsorbatzoglou**, the coordinator for the Southeast Europe Cooperation Initiative, chaired the panel on regional policy.

Beginning from the macro-level of regional policy, that is, inter-state cooperation between the countries of the Western Balkans, **Christos Nikas**, of the University of Western Macedonia, urged the EU to

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continue its work in re-integrating the Western Balkan economic area through trade and other agreements that encourage good economic relations between countries, with the hope that it will help the process of mutual understanding and conflict resolution. Along the lines of Julia Gray's presentation, he suggested that the EU should consider redesigning financial assistance on the basis of regional policy as has been done in the border regions within the EU to encourage trans-border cooperation and decentralization. Similarly, **Vassilis Monastiriotis**, of the Hellenic Observatory and European Institute of the London School of Economics, contended that by focusing on regional cooperation, the Western Balkans can actually work towards European integration. He reasoned through the controversial scenario that even if the region never reaches the point of EU accession, regional cooperation offers the countries an opportunity

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to promote their own regional identity and their own model and trajectory for development.

The failure of domestic regional policy might be seen as one of the precursors of conflict in the Western Balkans. Because borders and nations do not coincide, the failure of governments to address the needs of specific regions and minority groups has led to state failure. Therefore, not only is inter-state cooperation essential for peace, but decentralization will be especially important to stabilize a region that seems to have an endless capacity for splintering. In his presentation, **Marko Nikolic**, of the University of Bologna, described

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the differences in regional policy between Croatia and Serbia. While Croatia has overcome its impulse for strong centralization of state power, Serbia's new Constitution has taken a step in the wrong direction. He contends that this centralizing tendency may undermine state unity: as their needs and desires are subjugated to those of the central government, regional governments may have no other recourse than to launch secessionist rhetoric in order to get their voices heard. While the EU does require accession state to build capacity in local governments, in the most recent enlargement the primary drive has been to create central state capacity, which has had a centralizing tendency within the new member states. In the Western Balkans, it may be wise to change this policy somewhat in order to emphasize local capacity building.

Panel IV: Civil Society and the Political Criteria

It has been observed that the weakest link in the accession process is the EU's ability to promote civil society development and democratic consolidation. In recent enlargements, only countries that had already achieved a certain level of political development were able to successfully engage in the process. The fourth panel addressed this issue and was chaired by **Tom Countryman**, Charge d' Affaires of the US Embassy to Greece. Through a careful analysis of civil society in the region, **Lenard Cohen**, from Simon Fraser University, concluded that the region is no longer the disrupted, dispirited and politically immature region that it was 15 years ago. However, he cautioned that these developments are not irreversible and that dangerous islands of incivility and illiberalism still remain. Cohen argued that the next period of civil society development will be crucial in determining the course this region will take. In addition to continuing the funding for civil society

initiatives, the Commission should be tactical about how these funds are spent, especially since some observers have noticed that "watchdog" organizations (which are necessary for challenging the openness of government institutions and ensure that democratic ideals are realized) tend to be overlooked by EU funding.

In their presentations, **Cvete Koneska**, of the Analytica Think Tank, and **Obrad Kesic**, of TSM Global Consultants, both indicated that there is a deep divide between the realities of the European integration process and how it is perceived in the region. As mentioned above, false perceptions can lead to bad policies or complacency. Kesic argued that because Serbs tend to support EU accession more than NATO accession, the international community should make an effort not to make it seem as though the two processes are linked. Koneska argued that the Western Balkans have brought a new security dimension to the enlargement process, which has changed the dynamic considerably. There is a need to admit that the integration of the Western Balkans represents an entirely new type of project for the EU, since the issues that it is hoping to address there go far beyond what was attempted in Central Europe and the Baltic states. A new narrative on enlargement must be conceived and clearly stated to both the people of the Western Balkans as well as EU citizens in order to justify the policy and to sustain commitment to this project.

Panel V: The Greek Factor

Because this project is new for the European Union, it will require coordination with the international community's efforts for it to succeed. Neighboring countries such as Greece have a special role to play in this regard, which was the topic of the fifth panel, chaired by EES Director, **Martin Sletzinger**. Greece has already played a role in the region, according to the account of **Stellios Alifantis**, of the Center for Conflict Analysis in the Foundation for Mediterranean Studies and **Dimitris Lelovitis**, from the European Public Law Center in Athens. Their presentation explained how Greece led the way to partial regional integration through a sector-specific initiative on energy cooperation. This account offers a model for other countries to follow according to their strengths and interests in the region.

Greece also has an important symbolic role to play in extending friendship and understanding to the countries of the Western Balkans. There has been particular concern that Serbia may lose interest in the European project, given that its leaders have felt that they are under constant negative scrutiny by the West. Serbia is still seen as the crucial country for the Western Balkans: without its participation in the policy, the whole region risks failure. **Irene Kyriakopoulos** and **Steven Meyer** of the National Defense University, urged Greece to act as a catalyst to promote higher levels of intra-Balkan trade, commerce and investments, and

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The Perception of the Holocaust: Public Challenges and Experience in Lithuania

Saulius Suziedelis

Saulius Suziedelis is Professor of History at Millersville University and a member of the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania. He spoke at an EES Noon Discussion on September 26, 2007. The following is a summary of his presentation. The views expressed herein are his alone and should not be interpreted as reflecting in any way the official position of either the Commission or the office of the President of the Republic of Lithuania. Meeting Report 341.

The war in the East differed dramatically from that in the West in terms of human cost, ideological fanaticism and brutality. The contrasting fates of Denmark and Poland are instructive. The former was certainly the safest zone in Nazi-occupied Europe: between 1940 and 1945 deaths at the hand of the Nazis there numbered only slightly more than the total of automobile fatalities in California in one year. On the other hand, central Poland constituted a black hole of genocidal depravity, arguably the worst place in the world in all of the twentieth century. There is also the chronological dissonance—one can find a number of locales in Lithuania where more people were killed after V-E Day than during the Second World War. It is not difficult to see that the Western (primarily British and American) perspective and imagery of World War II is largely irrelevant to the experiences of the population inhabiting the regions between Germany and Russia. The vocabulary of the “good war,” the Holocaust and the Greatest Generation is meaningless to many Lithuanians. Appreciating the conflicting memories and narratives of the war is crucial in seeking to understand Lithuanian perception of the country’s difficult past.

Several issues complicate the discussion of Soviet crimes. The term “occupation” poses a barrier to Russians and Westerners unaccustomed to this characterization of Soviet rule. The notion that the Soviet forces “occupied” rather than “liberated” the Baltic lands evokes explosive reactions among Russians, while the liberation narrative strikes most Balts as puzzling, if not insulting. As any Pole knows, while Britain fought for survival against the Nazi onslaught in 1940, the Soviet regime conducted the first mass murders of Allied POW’s. Or as some are wont to point out, Stalin’s government did not cease being a criminal regime on June 22, 1941.

The concept of the Soviet “occupations” of 1940-1941 and 1944-1990 presents other problems: who was a pro-Soviet collaborator, and was the “collaboration” in 1940-1941, and 1945-1953, the same as in the 1980s? The issue of judicial proceedings and the so-called lustration issue complicate matters

further. Who was or was not a collaborator and what judicial sanctions, if any, should be applied to the aged veterans of the 1940s and early 1950s, or the bureaucrats who administered the less harsh Soviet repressive apparatus after the 1960s? Finally, in contrast to the neat Western separation of Soviet and Nazi realities, many Lithuanians view the two totalitarian regimes as historically connected. The issue can be controversial: Is there a problem with comparing Communist crimes to those of the Nazis? And if we compare, do we automatically arrive at the contentious and fruitless discussion of which is worse?

Then there is the issue of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the period of Soviet-German cooperation between September 1939 and June of 1941. (One should not forget the importance of the Nazi-Soviet Pact as a mobilizing force in the Baltic independence movements of the late 1980s, especially the famous “Baltic Way”). This irritant in Russian-Lithuanian relations has evoked commentary by

Is there a problem with comparing Communist crimes to those of the Nazis? And if we compare, do we automatically arrive at the contentious and fruitless discussion of which is worse?

President Vladimir Putin who reiterated the standard historiography of the Soviet Union as the “rejected suitor” during the British-French diplomatic initiatives of the summer of 1939. Furthermore, the welcoming response of the German invaders by Lithuanians in June 1941 has become a staple in documentaries, but Lithuanians can reasonably claim that the egregious behavior of the Stalinists during 1940-1941 explains in part the rage of many countrymen in the first days of the German occupation. Unfortunately, this has led to a kind of “two genocides” theory: Lithuanians were victims of the Soviet genocide, while Jews were victims of the Nazi murders. This connection is viewed in the West as a thinly veiled attempt to justify collaboration in the murder of the Jews. And any research on the question of the relationship of Jews to Soviet power in 1940-1941, even when conducted in a meticulously scholarly setting, raises hackles.

Lithuanian Society and the Holocaust

The perception of the Holocaust in Lithuania must be understood within a political context which has changed

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— *SUZIEDELIS*
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remarkably during the past decade. But caution is in order. The Holocaust was an event so momentous that virtually any generalization about the Shoah can be contradicted on some factual basis. There are, in other words, exceptions for every general proposition and this provides room for both honest differences of opinion as well as creating an opportunity for agenda-driven manipulations of the past.

Prior to Lithuania's independence in 1991, three views of the Nazi regime of 1941-1944 have prevailed: somewhat simplistically, they can be divided into the Soviet, Western and Lithuanian perspectives. The Soviet use of the Holocaust was directed at proving "bourgeois nationalist" complicity in the murder of the Jews and their service in the Nazi cause, with the purpose of discrediting both the large refugee anti-Communist diaspora in the West and the post-war anti-Soviet guerilla campaign. The Jewish specificity of the genocide was, with few exceptions, downplayed. The Western narrative of Lithuania's wartime has focused on the fate of the Jews, which inevitably highlighted native collaboration in the Final Solution. It has been suggested that the genocide of the Jews in the occupied Soviet Union could not have taken place without the participation of indigenous killers in the service of the Germans. One continuing problem of Western scholarship is the unfamiliarity of non-Baltic researchers with the languages of the region which denies them two important sources: the

There are, in other words, exceptions for every general proposition and this provides room for both honest differences of opinion as well as creating an opportunity for agenda-driven manipulations of the past.

mass of primary documents on the 1940-1945 period that are now available as well as the increasing number of Lithuanian-language secondary studies.

The uninformed Western narrative can lead to a kind of German-less Holocaust, as well as confusion concerning the nature and extent of collaboration. A methodologically questionable formulation is that of Lucy Dawidowicz in her *War Against the Jews 1933-1945* (1975): "The Baltic and Ukrainian populations [sic] collaborated voluntarily with the Germans in murdering the Jews." In 1996 Amos Perlmutter of American University declared flatly that "most of the Lithuanian people" collaborated with the Nazis (*Washington Times*, 28 December 1996). One researcher from Yad Vashem, in a paper delivered in Vilnius in 2002, portrayed the Germans of the summer and fall of 1941 as cinematic observers in a genocide carried out by locals.

Other misstatements, both significant and minor, are not uncommon. The infamous pogromist Algirdas (aka Jonas) Klimaitis, a small-time journalist

JUNIOR SCHOLARS' TRAINING SEMINAR 2008

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

DEADLINE: APRIL 14, 2008

East European Studies and the Committee on Eastern European Studies of the ACLS are soliciting applications for the 21st annual training seminar for junior scholars in East European studies, to be held August 8-11, 2008.

JSTS, funded by Title VIII, combines formal and informal meetings to promote a variety of intellectual exchanges. Activities include: individual presentations; constructive feedback and question and answer sessions; one-on-one meetings for Junior Scholars with Senior Scholars; advice regarding publishing; and discussions about the state of the profession and obtaining employment in the field.

Only American citizens or permanent residents may apply. Graduate students enrolled in a doctoral or masters program and recent graduates working on Southeast Europe in any field of study are eligible. Projects on other countries that have crossover application to the Western Balkan region will also be considered.

Application guidelines and forms are available on the EES website:

www.wilsoncenter.org/ees/
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and killer shunned by even pro-Nazi Lithuanian elements and unknown to most Lithuanians, was transformed into the head of the “anti-Soviet partisans” (a misreading of a German document by Raul Hilberg in his classic, *The Destruction of the European Jews*), later promoted to the head of the rebel anti-Soviet Lithuanian provisional government (Sol Littman, *War Criminal on Trial: The Rauca Case*), finally emerging as a Lithuanian “national hero” (Frankel and Kux, *Los Angeles Times*, April 29, 1990). Then there is the myth of the 100,000 anti-Soviet rebels during the uprising which coincided with the German invasion: proof of either great patriotism (Lithuanian authors) or extensive collaboration (Jewish writers). The actual number of insurgents was at least fivefold less.

For decades, Lithuanians both in the Soviet Union and the diaspora both proved largely immune to serious analysis of the Holocaust. Accustomed to self-perception as victims, the older generation of Lithuanian exiles in particular reacted defensively to any suggestion of Lithuanian collaboration with the Nazis. The minority of Lithuanian-American liberals and academics who argued for an open mind on the issue were often met with suspicion and charges of pro-Soviet bias. The exploitation of the Nazi connection in Soviet disinformation campaigns proved a convenient shield for anti-Soviet émigrés: charges of collaboration with the Nazis could easily be dismissed as KGB propaganda. There was nowhere for the younger generation to turn, even if they were put off by the fog of obfuscation and outright anti-Semitic prejudice of some of their elders. As noted, Western accounts of the Lithuanian role in World War II, whether in scholarship, media or fiction, were one-dimensional, often containing omissions and errors, ranging from the most elementary howlers to misidentification of persons and events. It was thus only natural that even those Lithuanians willing to open their minds were hardly likely to accept as guides authors who understood them so little. In Soviet Lithuania many people’s well-founded mistrust of the Party line did little to enhance the regime’s credibility when it fulminated against the crimes of the Nazis and their bourgeois henchmen.

The first years of independence, however, did not augur well for a new openness in Lithuanian society’s attitude towards the Holocaust. There was considerable interest in revelations of Soviet crimes, less concern with examining the Nazi occupation. The generally favorable international press coverage of Lithuania’s march to independence tended to reinforce a self-image of heroes and martyrs rather than perpetrators. It was in this atmosphere that the rehabilitation scandal of 1991 came as a rude shock. The controversy, which alleged that the new Lithuanian government was massively rehabilitating

Nazi war criminals, was accompanied by hype and overstatement exemplified by a bizarre photo and caption identifying what were clearly German Nazis as “Lithuanians greeting Hitler” in Jonathan Alter’s and Michael Myer’s piece in *Newsweek* (“An Unpardonable Amnesty,” September 16, 1991).

But the controversies did force some towards a reexamination of questions which much of the older generation would have preferred to let rest. A series of public statements by Lithuanian leaders expressed regret at the participation of Lithuanians in the Holocaust, culminating in the 1995 visit of President Algirdas Brazauskas to Israel during which he asked forgiveness “for [the actions of] those Lithuanians who mercilessly

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murdered, shot, deported and robbed Jews.” Still, academic and public discussion of the Holocaust was marked by a turbulent atmosphere. President Brazauskas’s statement in the Knesset evoked a public (and disgraceful) protest by the ‘patriotic’ intelligentsia, some of whom actually demanded that Jews, in turn, apologize for their crimes against the Lithuanian nation during the Soviet occupation.

Less dramatic, but no less important, were the changes that penetrated the country’s academic circles. In September 1997, an international academic conference on the history of the Jews and the Holocaust was held in the seaside resort in Nida, the first such gathering convened at the initiative of Lithuanians. At the same time, generally unnoticed in the West (partly because of the language barrier and partly because of a condescending disbelief that Lithuanians were capable of examining difficult issues on their own) academic research on the Holocaust was involving an increasing number of Lithuanians. Not everyone welcomed this development. As expected, many Lithuanians instinctively resisted this “blackening of the nation’s past,” but it was also clear that some Jews were less than enthusiastic about the Lithuanians’ incursion into a history which, until now, had been ‘owned’ by scholars with roots in the Jewish community.

Governments themselves became involved in addressing the Holocaust. Confronting the half-century of foreign domination, a past rife with charges and counter-charges of collaboration, had created domestic and international political difficulties. In May 1998,

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the three Baltic countries approved in principle the creation of international historical commissions. The International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes, was barely out of infancy when it was immediately criticized as a conflation of the Nazi and Soviet occupations, a charge that resonated among Israelis and diaspora Jews. A number of Holocaust survivors attacked the entire enterprise as political 'facade-painting,' intended to improve Lithuania's international image. Some Lithuanian émigrés, suspecting (correctly) that the Commission would undertake an investigation of native collaboration in the Holocaust, charged that President Adamkus's initiative was a Jewish-financed plot, or, at best, a sop to the West under American pressure. The usual postcommunist problems of xenophobia and anti-Semitism amid a weak civil society continue to pose serious difficulties for Holocaust research and education. And while it would be naive to believe that research and education are a panacea, they are, nonetheless, indispensable in steering society in a moderate and tolerant direction.

The work of Lithuania's international Commission, divided into two separate sub-commissions to study the crimes of each of the occupying powers, has proceeded despite the criticism. In addition to research, it also sponsors conferences and encourages educational outreach programs. The country's National Holocaust Education Project has been cited as an example for other postcommunist societies. Several academic

scholarly method and a judicious use of the sources can only contribute to solid academic research. These sorts of exchanges of opinion are all to the good. This interaction is fundamentally different from clashes of views based on stereotypes, dogmatic assertions, beliefs based on hearsay, and intransigence founded on untested or outmoded notions.

Perhaps, more important than the work of the Commission, is the gathering momentum of Holocaust research in Lithuania, especially among the younger generation. The time is approaching (if not already here) when the most innovative research on the Holocaust in Lithuania will be carried out by Lithuanians, whose research on the Holocaust will develop in ways that will not simply duplicate Western perspectives. It will not please everyone, nor will it answer all questions. There can be no closure concerning a crime as massive as the Holocaust. But one can hope that the journey by what were once but a few open minds will attract ever more travelers in a changing land. ■

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conferences have been convened, the latest in Vilnius on September 23-25, 2002, which included scholars from Israel (including the preeminent authority on the Holocaust, Yehuda Bauer), the United States, Germany, Russia, Ukraine, Poland and other states, and was the largest scholarly gathering on the Holocaust ever held in the Baltics.

In the end, unanimity of views among Jewish, Lithuanian, American and German scholars working on the Holocaust is neither possible nor desirable. Unless they wish to exist as chroniclers for established views, productive historians must be 'revisionists' to some extent. To hold differing perspectives based on honest scholarship, accepted

— GREECE

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improvements to infrastructure. Similarly, **Athanasios Moulakis**, an Onassis Foundation Fellow, offered historical and political arguments for continued Greek support of Serbia. From inside the EU, Greece could help to assure Serbian leaders that their interests are not ignored and that the unique history and politics of that country are understood by other member states.

Panel VI: State-Building through EU Accession

The final panel directly addressed the unique political challenges in the Western Balkans, with which the EU has never before had to contend in previous enlargements. As a post-conflict region, there are many flashpoints that constantly intensify inter-ethnic enmity, such as the issue of Kosovo's status and the attempts at forging a strong state in Bosnia and Herzegovina. **Constantine Buhayer**, of the University of Westminster, enumerated the many issues that the EU must confront, without having specific policy tools at its disposal. For instance, the Western Balkans has been splintering along ethnic lines, but not neatly. Unlike in Central Europe and the Baltic States, minority groups in the region tend to have secessionist aspirations, which minority rights standards are not able to address effectively. Moreover, organized crime and corruption seem particularly well entrenched in the region and will require unique policies and tools to overcome.

Gulner Aybet, of the University of Kent, presented a study that she conducted with her colleague **Florian Bieber**, on the differences between the success of the EU and NATO in applying conditionality in Bosnia. Among the countries of the Western Balkans, Bosnia will certainly test the ability of the EU to promote integration through its soft power. One way to proceed may be to use existing EU norms to compel specific policy changes in the country. **Zrinka Stimac**, of Friedrich-Schiller University, described the impossible situation of unifying the country despite having distinct, religious-specific education in Bosnia. Attempting to link desirable reforms with EU norms on education may be helpful, but only if local religious leaders can be brought into the formulation of these policies.

Conclusions

Over two short days, the workshop participants analyzed the enlargement policy to the Western Balkans from nearly every possible angle. The overwhelming conclusion was that the EU accession process offers the region the best hope for building peace and prosperity there. But the trajectory of this policy has been interrupted by a host of issues that continue to dominate politics in the region. In order to overcome these issues, the EU needs to build consensus and cooperation among its international partners so that all of the states allied in this policy are actively participating in it. The Commission must also deepen its understanding of the region in order to better deliver its message, lest it be co-

opted and distorted by short-term interests. The leaders of accession countries must realize that criticism does not mean a lack of commitment to enlargement, but should be used as an outline for how they should proceed on the accession track. Finally, regional elites should be supported and made to realize that this project is doable, and new member states should reach out to the countries of the Western Balkans to show them how. Just as France and Germany were able to reconcile and rebuild after WWII, the countries of the Western Balkans can also work to transform themselves through cooperation and integration with their neighbors. ■

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THURSDAY, 17 JANUARY: Noon Discussion, 12:00-1:00

Macedonia and its Hurdles on the Road to the European Union

5th Floor Conference Room

NAUM PANOVSKI, Associate Professor and Director of the Graduate Program in Performance and Society, Rhode Island College

WEDNESDAY, 23 JANUARY: Noon Discussion, 12:00-1:00

Understanding Bosnia and its Place in the Current Crisis in the Western Balkans

5th Floor Conference Room

PAUL SHOUP, Professor of Comparative Politics, University of Virginia

THURSDAY, 31 JANUARY: Book Launch, 3:30-5:00

Preying on the State: The Transformation of Bulgaria After 1989

5th Floor Conference Room

VENELIN GANEV, Author and Professor of Political Science, Miami University

WEDNESDAY, 6 FEBRUARY: Noon Discussion, 11:00-12:30

The Future of Security and Stability in Southeast Europe

6th Floor Auditorium

ERHARD BUSEK, Special Coordinator for the Stability Pact for Southeast Europe and **HIDO BISCEVIC**, Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council

WEDNESDAY, 13 FEBRUARY: Noon Discussion, 12:00-1:30

Can the EU Absorb the Western Balkans in Time?

6th Floor Boardroom

MARTIN SLETZINGER, EES Director and **NIDA GELAZIS**, EES Program Associate

WEDNESDAY, 27 FEBRUARY: Noon Discussion, 12:00-1:00

The New Political Dynamics of Southeastern Europe

6th Floor Boardroom

GORDON N. BARDOS, Assistant Director, Harriman Institute at Columbia University

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