**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

**“NAVIGATING COMPLEXITY AND CHANGE IN THE BALKANS”**

Organised by

1. University of New York Tirana, Albania

Institute of European and Balkan Studies - European Research Centre

1. Turkish - German University, Türkiye
2. Ibn Haldun University, Türkiye

**Venue**

Turkish - German University, Istanbul, Türkiye

**Date**

5 - 6 December 2024

Organizing Committee

1. Prof. Ali Gunes – Rector, UNYT, Albania
2. Prof. Cemal Yildiz – Rector, Turkish-German University, Türkiye
3. Prof. Atila Arkan – Rector, Ibn Haldun University, Türkiye
4. Assoc. Prof. Mirela Bogdani – Director of the “Institute of European and Balkan Studies” & Chief Editor of IJBS, UNYT, Albania
5. Assoc. Prof. Enes Bayrakli - Director of the “Migration and Integration Research Centre”, Turkish-German University, Türkiye
6. Dr. Sokol Lleshi – Head of European Research Centre, UNYT, Albania
7. Prof. Hamoud Salhi – California University, USA
8. Prof. Mirsad Karim – International University of Sarajevo, Bosnia & Hercegovina.
9. Assoc. Prof. Ines Nurja – Associate Editor of IJBS, UNYT, Albania
10. Ass. Prof. Idlir Lika – Political Science Department, Ibn Haldun University, Türkiye
11. Prof. Jamaliah Said, Universiti Teknologi Mara, Malaysia
12. Dr. Muhamet Kola - Balkan Research Centre, UNYT, Albania
13. Dr. Kujtim Hameli – University “Ukshin Hoti”, Prizren, Kosovo
14. Enes Durmus – CEO, UNYT, Albania
15. Kristi Zicishti – Head of Office of PR & Marketing, UNYT, Albania
16. Sefa Araz – Researcher, Turkish-German University, Türkiye

Scientific Committee

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2. Prof. Fatos Tarifa – Department of Politics & IR, UNYT
3. Prof. Migena Leskoviku – Institute of European Studies, University of Tirana
4. Assoc. Prof. Zaur Gasimov - Turkish-German University
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6. Assoc. Prof. Huseyin Onur Ercan – Turkish-German University
7. Dr. Adam Erlich - Department of Politics & IR, UNYT
8. Dr. Ayhan Sari - Turkish German University
9. Dr. Feridun Elgun – Administrator, UNYT
10. Dr. Uyesi Philipp Decker – Turkish-German University
11. Dr. Geron Kamberi – Centre for Economic and Social Studies, Tirana
12. Dr. Uyesi Dominic Heinz – Turkish-German University

**Rationale**

The Balkans have long been a region of significant geopolitical interest, often serving as a crossroads of cultural, political, and economic interactions. In recent years, the region has faced a period of heightened geopolitical uncertainty, influenced by various global and regional dynamics. Thus, the Balkans remain at the forefront of these changes as the world grapples with shifting power balances, emerging conflicts and economic transformations.

The conference aims to explore the multifaceted dimensions of the Balkans in these turbulent times and to address the complexities of the region’s current geopolitical landscape and its implications for local and global stakeholders. To academically argue the key issues related to the Balkan region the conference will focus on the theme “Navigating Complexity and Change in the Balkans”. The conference’s five thematic panels will be focused into areas of geopolitics and IR, security, politics, law and economics.

This event will bring together scholars, academics, policymakers and analysts from the Western Balkan, Turkish and Albanian universities and institutions who have written and researched the conference's subject matter and its main areas.

**Format & Language**

* The conference will be in a hybrid format (in-person/physical attendance and on Zoom).
* The language of the conference will be English.
* The papers of the conference will be published in the “Book of Conference Proceedings” and the selected (peer-reviewed) ones in the *International Journal of Balkan Studies* (UNYT).

**PROGRAMME**

**FIRSTDAY: THURSDAY, 5 DECEMBER 2024**

**Welcome and Registration**: 09.30 – 10.00

**Moderator**: Assoc. Prof. Mirela Bogdani - Director of the “Institute of European and Balkan Studies”, UNYT.

**Welcoming Remarks:** 10.00 – 10.30

1. Prof. Birol Akgun – President of Turkish Maarif Foundation
2. Prof. Ali Gunes – Rector, University of New York Tirana
3. Prof. Cemal Yildiz – Rector, Turkish-German University
4. Prof. Atila Arkan – Rector, Ibn Haldun University

**Opening Speech**: 10.30 – 11.00

Ambassador Mehmet Kemal Bozay – Deputy Minister Of Foreign Affairs and Director For EU Affairs

**Coffee Break**: 11.00 – 11.15

**Plenary Session:** 11.15 – 12.15

**Keynote Speakers**:

1. **Prof. John Loughlin** – University of Cambridge & Cardiff University, UK.

*“Globalisation, Deglobalization and Regionalisation: The Challenges for the Balkans”.*

1. **Prof. Mehmet Özkan** - Professor at the National Defence University, Türkiye & Member of the Executive Board of the Turkish Maarif Foundation.

*“Global Transformation and Local Adjustments: What is the next Local Geopolitics?”.*

*Discussion Session for 15 minutes*

**Luncheon:** 12.30 - 13.30

**1st Panel:** **Geopolitical Dynamics**

13.30 – 14.30

**Moderator**: Assoc. Prof. Enes Bayrakli - Director of the “Migration and Integration Research Centre”, Turkish-German University, Türkiye.

**Speakers**

1. “*The Erosion of Social Cohesion: Analysing the Forces that led to the Yugoslavia’s Dissolution”.*

**Dr. Rudina Duraj**. University of Tirana, Albania.

1. *“The Balkans in British Travel Narratives: A Geopolitical Perspective from Mark Mazower and Mary Edith Durham”.*

**Gülten Akgül**, **MSc.** The Ministry of National Education, Türkiye.

1. “*The Albanian Question and Japan: Diplomacy, Intelligence Activities, and Public Opinions (1912 – 1923)”.*

**Mr. Takuya Nakazawa**. Second Secretary of the Embassy of Japan in Albania. Japan.

1. *“National Role Conception in the Balkans: Serbia’s Constant Shifts between Germany, Russia, and Turkey”.*

**Yunus Mazı**, **Dr(c).** Chemnitz University of Technology, Germany.

1. *“Croatia’s Role in the Enlargement Process of EU towards Western Balkans: An Analysis of Zagreb Declaration of 6th May, 2020”.*

**Haşim Koç, PhD candidate**, Georg-August-University Göttingen, Faculty of Philosophy, Germany & Chief Advisor of the President of Council of Higher Education, Turkiye.

*Discussion Session for 15 minutes*

**2nd Panel: II. Security and stability in the Balkans**

14.45-15.45

**Moderator**: Dr. Idlir Lika, Ibn Haldun University, Türkiye.

**Speakers***:*

1. *“Transcending the Negative Impacts of Identity Politics in the Conduct of Inter-state Relations to Foster a Culture of Living Together, for a Common Future of Peace, Stability and Prosperity in the Balkans*”.

**Assoc. Prof. Hasan Ulusoy.** Ambassador, Visiting Professor at UNYT, Türkiye.

1. “*Serbia-Kosovo Security Dilemma: From Dismemberment of Yugoslavia till Today*”.

**Assoc. Prof. Ilir Kalemaj.** University of New York Tirana, Albania.

1. *“The Republic of Azerbaijan and the Balkan Countries: The Role of Education in Cooperation. Current Situations and Goals”.*

**Assoc. Prof. Nurlana Mustafayeva**. Baku Slavic University, Azerbaijan.

1. *“The Gulf Effect in the Balkans after the Bosnian War”.*

**Dr. Sumeyye Kayn Uyar & Yasin Çetin**. Ibn Haldun University, Türkiye.

1. “*Cyber-security Challenges for NATO Member Albania: Assessing Threats and Response Strategies*”.

**Dr. Muhamet Kola.** University of New York Tirana, Albania.

*Discussion Session for 15 minutes*

**SECOND DAY: FRIDAY, 6 DECEMBER 2024**

**Welcome and Registration**: 09.00 – 09.30

**Plenary Session:** 09.30 – 10.00

**Keynote Speaker:**

1. **Prof. Enver Hoxhaj** – University of Prishtina; Vice Speaker of Parliament of Kosovo & Former Foreign Minister of Kosovo.

*“Return of History and the Balkan Chessboard”.*

*Discussion Session for 15 minutes*

**3rd Panel: Political, Judicial and Social Transformations**

10.15 – 11.30

**Moderator**: Dr. Sokol Lleshi, Head of European Research Centre, UNYT, Albania.

**Speakers***:*

1. *“Passengers of the Same Train”: The Western Balkans, two Decades after Commencing the EU Journey*”.

**Assoc. Prof. Mirela Bogdani**. University of New York Tirana, Albania.

1. “*Albanian Identity a ‘Mirroring’ Process of the Balkan and European Identities*”.

**Assoc. Prof. Eva Tafili**. University of Tirana, Albania.

1. “*Trust and Transparency in the Balkans: Key for Navigating through Complexity and Change*?”

**Dr. Dominic Heinz**, Turkish-German University, Türkiye.

1. “*All in the Same Boat to Brussels: Political and Democratic State of the WB towards EU Integration*”.

**Megi Gjoni**, **Dr(c).** Institute of European Studies, University of Tirana, Albania.

1. “*Strengthening the Rule of Law and the Fight Against Corruption in the Western Balkans: Conditionalities for EU Accession*”

**Andrea Mazelliu**, **Dr(c).** University of New York Tirana, Albania.

1. “*Compromising Complex Realities: Western Balkan Paths between EU, regionalism, and nationalism*”.

**Alda Banushi**, **MSc.** Independent Researcher, Albania.

*Discussion Session for 15 minutes*

**Coffee Break**: 11.45 – 12.00

**4th Panel: Economic and Developmental Challenges**

12.00 – 13.15

**Moderator**: Dr. Ayhan Sari, Turkish-German University, Türkiye.

**Speakers***:*

1. “*The Legal Migration Impact on the Unemployment Rate in the Western Balkan Countries*”.

**Assoc. Prof. Ines Nurja**, University of New York Tirana, **Gerta Jakupi**, **MSc.** University of New York Tirana, & **Deni Tabaku**, **BSc.** University of New York Tirana, Albania.

1. “*The Political Economy of Euro Adoption in the Balkans”.*

**Prof. Ceyhun Elgin**, Bogazici University, Türkiye.

1. *“Charting Economic Transformation: Trends, Challenges, and Opportunities for Sustainable Development in North Macedonia”.*

**Dr. Ahmet Lökçe**, International Balkan University, North Macedonia.

1. “*Institutional Quality and Economic Growth: Evidence of SEE6 Countries*”.

**Assoc. Prof. Nevila Mehmetaj**, University of Shkodra “Luigj Gurakuqi”, Albania.

1. “*The Impact of Macro-economic Variables on FDI in the Balkans compared to the EU Countries*”.

**Dr. Ledia Thomo**, University of New York Tirana, **Gerta Jakupi**, **MSc.** University of New York Tirana, & **Alesia Pinari**, **MSc.** University of New York Tirana, Albania.

1. “*Investment and Trade Policies as Catalysts for Growth: Analysing Economic Dynamics in the Balkans*”.

**Dr. Ardita Bylo**, University of New York Tirana, Albania.

*Discussion Session for 15 minutes*

**Lunch Break:** 13.30 – 14.30

**5th Panel: Future Perspectives of the Balkans**

14.30 – 15.45

**Moderator**: Dr. Philipp Decker, Turkish-German University, Türkiye.

**Speakers***:*

1. “*Discussing Strategies for Navigating Uncertainty in the Balkans”.*

**Dr. Idlir Lika**, Ibn Haldun University, Türkiye.

1. “*Digital Transformation in the Balkans: The Role of UX/UI Design in Navigating Public Sector Innovation”.*

**Dr. Harri Aleksi**, University of Arts & **Kein Katroshi**, **MSc.** University of New York Tirana, Albania.

1. *“The Prospect of the Western Balkans in the European Constitutional Space”.*

**Dr. Plarent Ruka**, University of New York Tirana, Albania.

1. *"Harmonization of Public Procurement Contracts with EU Directives in the Western Balkan Countries".*

**Endi Kalemaj**, **Dr(c).** University of Tirana & **Kejsi Marku**, **MSc.** Credins Bank, Albania.

*Discussion Session for 15 minutes*

**Closing Remarks**: 16.00 – 17.00