



CENTRE FOR SECURITY COOPERATION

Security Sector Reform Pillar

“The 5th RACVIAC/KAS Annual Conference on Security Challenges for Europe”

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22nd-24th November 2017

Zagreb, Republic of Croatia

Introduction

The “5th Annual RACVIAC/KAS Conference on Security Challenges for Europe” was held in Zagreb on 22nd - 24th November 2017. The 2017 Conference was a continuation of an established series of activities aimed towards enabling open and comprehensive discussions on emerging security challenges for the European countries. It was the fifth annual activity conducted as a result of fruitful cooperation between RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) Office in Croatia. In order to increase the quality of the content by strengthening the event’s academic dimension this year’s Conference was supported by the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Zagreb as the principal academic partner.

The purpose of the event was to continue to provide a platform for open expert and academic debates on common security challenges for Europe in general and South-Eastern Europe (SEE) in particular, to review the impact of the geopolitical shifts on national security developments, to provide participants with an opportunity to share national considerations on the perceived challenges, to foster dialogue and cooperation and support a scientific approach in developing national security policies.

Execution

The Conference was opened with a Welcome address by RACVIAC Director Ambassador Haydar Berk who pointed out that over the past few years Europe and South-Eastern Europe have struggled with how to address the different challenges, potential risks and threats such as terrorism, cyber threats, the threat of mines and unexploded ordnance, natural and manmade disasters, radicalism and violent extremism, and, though not in the same category, illegal migration, all of which make the security situation in the area quite complex.

In his Welcome address the Head of the KAS Office in the Republic of Croatia Dr Michael A. Lange said that it is important to turn the attention again to the security concerns resulting from migration and future re-opening of the Balkan migration route, emphasizing that a new migration crisis could only be avoided through a more active and clear policy by the EU vis-à-vis all countries in the region.

The Conference Keynote speech was delivered by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of the Republic of Croatia Mr Damir Krstičević. Elaborating on the area of South East Europe Minister Krstičević said that it still hasn’t been completely stabilized. There are significant unresolved internal political issues in some of the countries of the region, inter-ethnic

tensions, growing national and religious extremism, economic and social difficulties, corruption, weak state institutions as well as a lack of consensus on the membership in Euro-Atlantic integrations. These concerns could represent, individually or jointly, the source of security deterioration. He also emphasized that „the most notable contemporary security threat in Europe is terrorism, motivated by religious radicalism”.



Conference Opening - H.E. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of the Republic of Croatia Mr Damir Krstičević

The Conference continued with the First Panel that covered the contemporary security challenges for SEE Europe. The aim of the Panel was to present viewpoints on the contemporary challenges for individual countries in SEE and to improve ways and means of regional cooperation for prevention and suppression of the causes of risks and threats.

The panellists were Mr Sead Jusić, Deputy Minister of Defence in the MoD of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr Dragan Nikolić, State Secretary at the MoD of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Mr Petar Mihatov, PhD, Assistant Minister for Defence Policy at the MoD of the Republic of Croatia, Mr Ivica Ivanović, MSc, Director General of the Directorate for Defence Policy at the MoD of Montenegro, Mr Damir Črnčec, PhD, Political Adviser to the Chief of Defence in the General Staff of the MoD of the Republic of Slovenia. The Panel was moderated by Ambassador Haydar Berk, RACVIAC Director.

The most critical security threats and challenges in SEE were addressed, particularly political and economic

instability, corruption and organized crime, high level of (youth) unemployment, terrorism, violent extremism, mines, explosive devices and ordnances left behind from previous wars, natural and man-made disasters, cyber threats and migrations. Regional unsettlements, hybrid warfare and stagnation of the Euro-Atlantic integration processes in some of the countries were also discussed.

These interrelated conditions in SEE countries signify the importance of dialogue and mutually beneficial cooperation aimed at risks and threats prevention and increasing resilience. The panellists pointed out that Europe can't be stable without an integrated and secure South-Eastern Europe.



First Conference Panel - High representatives of national ministries of SEE countries

The Second Panel was dedicated to the origins and impacts of the challenge of terrorism. The main focus was on providing insights into the root causes of terrorism and contemporary policies for its prevention and suppression and how to improve regional and inter-agency cooperation and exchange of information.



Second Conference Panel Speakers (from left to right): Mr R. Mikac, Phd, Mr F. Qehaja, PhD, Ms O. Injac, PhD, Mr S. von Münchow, PhD

* Turkey recognizes the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.

The panellists were Mr Florian Qehaja, PhD, Executive Director of the Kosovar

Center for Security Studies, Mr Sebastian von Münchow, PhD, Professor at the European Center for Security Studies George C. Marshall, Ms Olivera Injac, PhD, Professor at the University Donja Gorica (ME), and Mr Robert Mikac, PhD, Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Political Science of Zagreb University (HR) as the moderator. The research assessment on foreign fighters, violent extremism and challenges for counterterrorism policies were discussed from different points of view.

The second day of the Conference was marked by an Academic Forum on the topic “Lessons learned from the irregular uncontrolled migration and refugee crisis in 2015/2016”. The panellists were Mr O. Can Ünver, PhD, Associate Professor at Antalya AKEV University, Republic of Turkey, Mr Oliver Andonov, PhD, Assistant Professor at the Military Academy “Gen. Mihajlo Aposotolski” - Skopje, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Mr Zoran Keković, PhD, Full Professor at the Faculty of Security Studies, University of Belgrade, Republic of Serbia, Mr Sándor Gallai, PhD, Scientific Director at the Migration Research Institute, Hungary, Ms Marta Zorko, PhD, Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb, Republic of Croatia, Col (GS) Andreas Jödecke, Director Operational Region North in the Federal Office of Migration and Refugees, Federal Republic of Germany. The Panel was moderated by Mr Mišo Mudrić, PhD, Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb, Republic of Croatia.



The Academic Forum - the Panellists

The panellists provided a comprehensive analysis of the challenges, implemented policies and lessons learned in Europe based on specific national experiences. They underlined the bad assessments of the outcomes of the recent Middle East crisis and unpreparedness of the countries at the migrant routes and the European Union as a whole to deal with humanitarian, political, economic and security aspects of the refugee crisis.

Conclusion

“The 5th RACVIAC/KAS Annual Conference on Security Challenges for Europe” highlighted terrorism and illegal migrations as the most notable security challenges in Europe. In South-Eastern Europe these security developments are additionally burdened by the legacy of recent past, some unresolved political issues and ongoing transitional processes. The countries of the region have recognized the threat posed by foreign fighter returnees and have reacted with the adoption of legislative measures aimed at prevention and sanction of the activities that lead to radicalization and terrorism. The influx of migrants has changed the European demographic map and posed societal and security challenges to the European countries. There is no unified EU response to this challenge. Every country has had its own policy and has acted in accordance with the perceived national, political, economic and security interests. Although immigration policy is the prerogative of national states, the joint EU systems based on solidarity should be improved. In order to increase the resilience of the societies, the institutional capacity to deal with the consequences of the migrant crisis should be strengthened. Finally, it is of crucial importance to address the origins of terrorism and the migrant crisis and not only to be focused on dealing with its consequences.

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