

# International Institute for Peace

The International Institute for Peace (IIP) is a non-governmental organization with consultative status to the ECOSOC and UNESCO

The IIP functions as a platform to promote peace and non-violent conflict resolution across the world to a wide range of stakeholders – scholars, diplomats, practitioners, military personnel, and civil society as well as students and private citizens. The Institute strives to address the most topical issues of the day and promote dialogue, public engagement, and a common understanding to ensure a holistic approach to conflict resolution and a durable peace.



INTERNATIONAL  
INSTITUTE FOR  
PEACE

## Annual Report 2023



# **International Institute for Peace**

## **Annual Report 2023**

Vienna, February 2024

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## Preface

*Stephanie Fenkart & Hannes Swoboda*

It is always important to strive towards peace, but it is particularly critical today when the world as we know it has been torn apart by brutal conflicts and wars, the likes of which we haven't seen in years: in Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, Libya, Yemen, Syria, Afghanistan, and the DRC, to name but a few. With the rise of illiberal tendencies inside Europe and its neighborhood, the gradual mainstreaming of radical ideas, growing attacks on democracy and the rule of law, and the polarization of societies and institutions, it has become ever more difficult to find answers to the tough questions that we are facing in 2024 – and will continue to face in the years to come.

The West must recognize that the world has shifted from unipolarity to multipolarity, with new, emerging actors from the Global South seeking to challenge what they perceive as the West's dominance. One such example is the ongoing enlargement of the BRICS, which includes dictatorships, authoritarian states, and democracies alike from the Global South. Another is the emergence of Turkey and Qatar as key mediators for conflicts in which the EU and the US have lost their credibility.

While Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is still the most important conflict for Europe, Israel's war in Gaza against Hamas, following its horrific attack on Israeli civilians on October 7th, is the most important conflict from a global perspective. Whereas the crimes of the Holocaust are inseparable from Western identity and state-building, the Palestinian cause has nearly the same symbolic value outside of the West, as Ivan Krastev noted in a lecture in December at Vienna's "Presseclub Concordia." It is important for the West to understand this perspective and to take a more realistic look at the world.

In 2024, these wars and others will continue. At the same time, around half of the world's population will also be called to the polling stations to elect their governments, with elections in the US, Russia, the EU, India, Mexico, and Taiwan, among others. For everyone who deals with foreign policy, it is crucial to understand this interplay of wars and elections, the reciprocal influence of foreign and domestic politics.

With all these difficulties and other, no less important challenges – climate change, international crime, terrorism, cybercrime, inflation, and food and energy security, among others – the IIP will continue to work towards a world in which peace is something worth striving for. The balancing of interests between the West and the Global South – also known as compromise – needs to be the goal of our diplomacy and foreign policy. We seek to work towards a world in which war is not, as Clausewitz put it, politics with other means, but where our foreign policy and diplomacy follow a logic of peace rather than narrow-minded national interests couched in self-professed "values." Without peace, all our values lose any meaning or impact.

We would like to thank our colleagues Marylia Hushcha and Luka Cekic, our Vice President Angela Kane, our Chair of the Advisory Board Heinz Gärtner, and our technical, video, and audio engineer Michel Andriessen for their valuable work and support in our activities.



## About the IIP

The International Institute for Peace (IIP) is an international, non-governmental organization with its headquarters in Vienna, Austria. The IIP has consultative status to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) and the United Nations Organization for Education, Science, Culture and Communication (UNESCO). It operates on the basis of Austrian law as a non-profit association. Established in 1956, the Institute was re-founded by its former president Erwin Lanc in 1989, and its current president is Dr. Hannes Swoboda.

The IIP functions as a platform to promote peace and non-violent conflict resolution across the world to a wide range of stakeholders – scholars, diplomats, practitioners, military personnel, and civil society as well as students and private citizens. The Institute strives to address the most topical issues of the day and promote dialogue, public engagement, and a common understanding to ensure a holistic approach to conflict resolution and a durable peace.

In order to address the diverse and multifaceted approaches to peaceful conflict resolution, the IIP collaborates with various national and international institutions and organisations (see our partners). The IIP, both alone and through collaborations, organizes lectures, conferences, seminars, background talks, workshops, and symposia on a wide range of issues.

In recent years, the IIP has focused in particular on the areas of international security, disarmament, arms control, migration, and non-proliferation. On a regional level, the IIP emphasizes the EU's neighborhood, including the Western Balkans, the Eastern Partnership countries, Russia, the Middle East, and Africa. However, the IIP has also featured events on topics ranging from the arts and EU foreign policy to the Korean peninsula and Latin America.

The IIP's values:

- **Diversity and dialogue:** The IIP seeks to include and represent voices and perspectives from a variety of backgrounds and identities.
- **Peace and human rights:** The IIP emphasizes the need to support and protect human rights and peace at all times and in all circumstances, both in our events and discussions as well as through our actions.
- **Cooperation and partnership:** The IIP strives to actively collaborate with partner organizations to utilize our relative strengths and foster teamwork.
- **Gender:** The IIP aims to promote gender equality and mainstream gender perspectives, from ensuring equal representation on panels to highlighting gender as a topic. The IIP is a proud member of International Gender Champions, a leadership network that brings together female and male decision-makers to break down gender barriers.
- **Nonpartisanship:** The IIP avoids all partisan affiliations and works to engage with voices from all political parties and outlooks.
- **Public engagement:** The IIP welcomes all interested members of the public to our panel events and discussions and publishes information and recaps of all events to improve accessibility.
- **Support for our interns:** The IIP is committed to paying its interns in order to allow students and young professionals to gain practical experience in the field.



## IIP Team and Board



**Hannes Swoboda, President**



**Angela Kane, Vice President**



**Stephanie Fenkart, Director**



**Erwin Lanc, Honorary President**



**Heinz Gärtner, President of the Advisory Board**



**Marylia Hushcha, Researcher**





**Luka Cekic**, Project Assistant



**Elene Gagnidze**, Project Assistant

## Executive Board

**Dr. Hannes Swoboda**, President; former MEP

**Dr.h.c. Mag. Angela Kane**, Vice President; former Undersecretary General at the United Nations

**Dr. Klaus von Dohnanyi**, Vice President, former MP at the German Bundestag

**Mag. Stephanie Fenkart**, M.A., Director

**Prof. Dr. Anton Giulio d'Robertis**, Board member, University of Bari

**Prof. Dr. Vivien A. Schmidt**, Board member, Boston Univeristy

**RA Dr. Leopold Specht**, Board member, Specht & Partner Rechtsanwalt GmbH

**Monika Begović, PhD**, Board member, President of the Atlantic Council of Croatia



## Advisory board

**Prof. Heinz Gärtner**, Chair of the Advisory Board, lecturer at the University of Vienna

**Dr. Hakan Akbulut**, Research Associate and Lecturer with the Department of Politics at the University of Kaiserslautern

**Prof. Vladimir Baranovsky**, Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO)

**Mw. Prof. Dr. L.a. Luiza Bialasiewicz**, University of Amsterdam

**Adnan Ćerimagić**, European Stability Initiative, Germany

**Dr. Matthias Dembinski**, Peace Research Institute Frankfurt

**Prof. Glenn Diesen**, Professor at the University of South-Eastern Norway (USN) and associate editor at the Russia in Global Affairs journal

**Dr. Cengiz Günay**, Director of the Austrian Institute for International Affairs ÖIIP and Lecturer at the University of Vienna

**Amb. (ret.) Dr. Thomas Hajnoczi**, former Ambassador at the Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe and International Affairs

**Prof. Shireen T. Hunter**, Honorary Fellow at the Georgetown University's Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding

**Dr. Ralph Janik**, Lecturer at Sigmund Freud Private University Vienna, the University of Vienna, Andrassy University Budapest, and Universität der Bundeswehr München

**Dr. Mykola Kapitonenko**, Associate Professor at the Institute of International Relations of Kyiv National Taras Shevchenko University

**Mag. Gudrun Kramer**, Programme Manager at German Development Cooperation (GIZ), Sarajevo

**Dr. Pascal Lottaz**, Associate Professor at Kyoto University

**Dr. Yulia Nikitina**, Associate Professor, World Politics Department, Leading Research Fellow, Center for the Eurasian Studies, MGIMO University

**Prof. Ursula Werther Pietsch**, Lecturer of International Law and International Relations; University of Graz, Austria, and University of German Armed Forces, Munich

**Yauheni Preiherman**, Minsk Dialogue Council on International Relations

**Prof. Herbert Reginbogin**, Fellow/Professor at the Catholic University of America Institute for Public Policy

**Colonel Dr. Markus Reisner PhD**, Theresian Military Academy, Austria

**Dr. Thomas Roithner**, peace researcher, Austria

**Prof. Erzsébet N. Rózsa**, Professor at the University of Public Service, Budapest and Academic Advisor at the Institute for World Economics of the Center for Economic and Regional Studies

**Dr. Mher Sahakyan**, China-Eurasia Council for Political and Strategic Research, Armenia

**Prof. Tom Sauer**, Professor in International Politics at the Universiteit Antwerpen

**Prof. Dr. Georg Schild**, University of Tübingen

**Prof. Annita Sciacovelli**, University of Bari

**Dr. Goran Svilanovic**, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia/State Union of Serbia and Montenegro & former Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council

**Mag. Lukas Wank**, Director of Global Responsibility – Austrian Platform for development and humanitarian aid

**Amb. (ret.) Dr. Fred Tanner**, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva

**Dr. Dimitrios Triantaphyllou**, Professor of International Studies at the Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences in Athens

**Mag. Waltraut Urban**, The Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies



## IIP in Numbers 2023





# Projects and Activities





# International Security and Disarmament

*Angela Kane*

The year 2023 continued the downward geopolitical trend. The Russian invasion of Ukraine constitutes the biggest threat to peace and security in Europe. Since its start in February 2022, it has become a grinding war of attrition and shows no sign of abating, while military and political support from the US and Europe sustains the Ukrainian defense.

The danger of the Russia-Ukraine war leading to the use of nuclear weapons may have abated, but the Doomsday Clock is set at 90 seconds to “midnight,” indicating the dire and unstable situation in which we find ourselves. The possibilities of resumed bilateral US-Russian arms control talks dissipated over the course of the year, with Russia rejecting in September the formal US offer to engage and discuss a possible framework after the expiration of New START in 2026.

Russia also exited the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, long considered a pillar of European stability – a move that was followed by the suspension of NATO members of their treaty obligations. Another blow was the Russian State Duma’s vote to revoke Russia’s ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty – another step in the growing list of Russia’s nuclear signaling. These steps – combined with the refusal by Russia to engage on arms control matters in general – are leading to a rapid dismantling of the remaining arms control architecture, which has provided a sense of security and stability for decades.

Another blow to peace and security was the deadly October 7th attack by Hamas on Israel, which resulted in an Israeli military campaign that has killed thousands and led to widespread destruction and displacement in the Palestinian territory. The conflict has further spread across the Middle East, bringing in Iran’s proxies in neighboring countries and increasing the danger of involving extra-regional actors.

The tools to help calm the situation and improve the cooperative environment – the UN Security Council, the OSCE, and other entities – have failed to be effective. Vetoes in the Security Council by Russia (in the case of Ukraine) and the US (with regards to Israel) have prevented measures to advance dialogue and constructive action, and we have witnessed what could be called a “dialogue of the deaf”: each party being entirely unresponsive to what the other says. Conflict mediation can only be effective once the situation changes and discussions become possible.

Yet Europe and the Middle East are not the only two areas of geopolitical concern. The situation on the Korean peninsula, in the view of experts, has become more dangerous, with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un having made the decision to pursue a military solution. The US is seen as being in global retreat, and the recent firing of cruise missiles by North Korea as well as the strengthened partnership and delivery of weapons to Russia from North Korean ballistic arsenals have heightened concerns about Pyongyang’s intentions and realignment.

Again, the instruments in the political toolkit to address this situation are weak: national statements of condemnation and the imposition of sanctions are more directed to internal audiences than effective measures to reverse North Korea’s course of action.



China, now a world power on par with the US, has not been at the forefront of these issues. It continues to argue that, before engaging with the US and Russia on nuclear arms control, its numbers must be at parity – an unlikely scenario, even while China is building up its nuclear and military arsenals. And China may be waiting for US superiority in Asia to decline.

Global governance, which requires the effective cooperation of major powers to ensure a more peaceful world, is a distant goal at present. The Summit for the Future proclaimed by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to take place in September 2024 may be unable to deliver on its stated promise of improving peoples' lives and enhancing security given the lack of unity of purpose.

The International Institute for Peace has remained active in drawing attention to these geopolitical threats through organizing panel discussions, podcasts, and blogs and stimulating debates on the burning topics of the day. The active participation of the public and views on our YouTube channel recordings all attest to the fact that there is heightened concern among the population but also a desire to learn more about the sources of conflict and ways to address them.



## Selected projects

### Vienna Peace and Security Talks 2023

#### Renewing Foundations of European Security

The European Security Architecture is in a deep crisis. The Russian attack on Ukraine re-shaped the perceived Western-led international order. The conviction that large-scale wars between states in Europe belong to the past faded away. Currently, the debates concentrate on the immediate management of the ongoing war, the mitigation of its repercussions on other regions in Europe as well as on the rules-based international order. In the face of a protracted war of attrition in Ukraine, Europe must take into account numerous security considerations. This year, the question of Ukraine's reconstruction has played an important role in the Euro-Atlantic expert discourse. The focus of these discussions is increasingly on economic and investment policies, as well as macro-financial challenges. This focus is justified, of course.

However, during this year's Vienna Peace and Security Talks, we aimed to address questions regarding the socio-political foundations and challenges that decision-makers should consider and tackle in order to stabilize and improve the security situation in Ukraine and at the NATO-Russia contact zone.

<b>Date</b>	9 October 2023
<b>Venue</b>	Urania Dachsaal, Uraniastraße 1, 1010 Vienna
<b>Format</b>	Conference
<b>Partners</b>	Friedrich Ebert Foundation Regional Office in Vienna; Karl-Renner Institut

<b>Expert Sessions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Obstacles on the way towards peace in Ukraine</li> <li>- Preparing the peace in Ukraine</li> <li>- Adapting the global framework to the new challenges for peace</li> </ul>
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**Public panel** Towards a more inclusive global governance. What role for Europe?

Introduction: GERHARD MARCHL, Karl-Renner-Institut, Vienna

Speakers: LÁSZLÓ ANDOR, Secretary General of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS), Brussels; JULIANO DA SILVA CORTINHAS, Professor of International Relations at the University of Brasília; STEPHANIE FENKART, Director of the IIP; MARY KALDOR, Professor Emeritus of Global Governance and Director of the Conflict Research Programme at The London School of Economics and Political Science

Moderator: CHRISTOS KATSIOLIS, Head of FES Regional Office for International Cooperation, Vienna

**Conference materials** Available at: <https://www.iipvienna.com/vienna-peace-security-talks-2023>





## Die USA, der Iran und das Nuklearabkommen

Im Mittelpunkt dieses Buches steht das Nuklearabkommen mit dem Iran. Es behandelt auch Irans geopolitische Position und die nuklearwaffenfreie Zone im Mittleren Osten. Ein Abkommen würde aber nicht nur den Zugang des Iran zu einer Nuklearwaffe versperren, sondern auch die Zivilgesellschaft stärken.

Date	24 February 2023
Format	Panel discussion
Speakers	KARIN BURMESTER, Senior Nuclear Security Officer, IAEA, retired, wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin des Bundesministeriums für Umwelt und nukleare Sicherheit, i.R. HEINZ GÄRTNER, Institut für Politikwissenschaft der Universität Wien, Vorsitzender des Beirates des Internationalen Instituts für den Frieden (IIP) CENGIZ GÜNAY, Direktor des Österreichischen Institutes für Internationale Politik (oiip) STEPHAN KLEMENT, EU Head of Delegation to the International Organisations in Vienna and Special Advisor on the Iran nuclear issue
Moderation	MARYLIA HUSHCHA, Researcher at the IIP



## Dual Neutralization as a Pathway to a denuclearized Korea

Date	10 August 2023
Format	Blog article
Authors	HEINZ GÄRTNER, Chair of the Advisory Board at the IIP PASCAL LOTTAZ, Associate Professor at the Law Faculty and Hakubi Center of Kyoto University (Japan)

### **“Finlandization” for the North and “Austriazation” for the South provide a path toward unification – and denuclearization.**

On July 27, the Korean Armistice Agreement that ended the bloodshed on the Korean Peninsula turned 70 years old. While the agreement did not bring a comprehensive peace – technically the two sides are still at war – it stopped the dying and laid the foundation for the separate development of two Koreas, locked in a state of constant mutual threat. That threat has been nuclear at least since the North developed its first indigenous bomb around 2006. Today it is getting worse, with the rapid development of Pyongyang’s nuclear and missile programs and the South extracting nuclear assurances from the United States with the visit of a U.S. nuclear submarine in Busan.

While the U.S. and much of the world community might wish for de-escalation and ultimately denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, it must be recognized that all attempts to achieve that goal will fail as long as international political conditions to guarantee the survival of both political regimes are missing. Looking at what happened to Iraq, Libya, and Ukraine, the North Koreans would be quite frankly unwise to give up their nuclear stockpile without another ironclad guarantee for their safety. Solving the nuclear issue requires this political prerequisite to be addressed first.

The question is if denuclearization is even possible within a divided peninsula, or if a unification scheme might provide the key to success. The latter is most likely the case. A successful reunification must naturally go hand-in-hand with arms reduction, which could include a phasing-out of the mutual nuclear threat. If Korea can solve its Mexican standoff, the nuclear question will become redundant.

### **Unification Through Neutralization**

Save a geopolitical miracle, North Korea will remain tethered to China not only economically but also as a buffer state to the U.S. military threat. Likewise, South Korea remains dependent on its military integration with Washington to deter the North. Hence the fate of the peninsula is tied to the interests of their respective guarantor states. “Solving Korea” is a four-way game. Even if there was an inner-Korean peace deal, it would be spoiled by one of the guarantors if they felt the change would threaten their interests.

Hence, other things being equal, only a win-win-win-win situation has any chance of success. For the two Koreas, this would mean unification, as both have been longing for this outcome for the past 70 years. It is often the German experience of 1989-90 that is cited as a model for Korean unification but a more realistic path is, in fact, the one Germany explicitly rejected – namely a permanent neutralization.

The literature on Korean neutrality is vast and there is no lack of ideas or arguments of why a neutral peninsula would be a good thing. Our argument is different in the sense that we are able

to show how a neutralization process in both Korea separately could realistically lead to the desired outcome. Concretely, we are proposing the concepts of “Finlandization” for the North and “Austriazation” for the South as a way toward unification.

### **The Finlandization of North Korea**

“Finlandizing” North Korea would mean changing the current China-North Korea mutual defense treaty toward a security agreement akin to the one the Soviet Union used to have with Finland. This partial alliance guaranteed Moscow that Finnish territory would not only be off-limits to its adversaries, but that the Finns were contractually bound to the defense of the Soviet Union should an attack through their territory on the USSR be attempted. The crucial point is that this was not a universal mutual defense pact but a limited one, securing the USSR’s northwestern flank.

The agreement also provided for bilateral consultations and the option of Soviet support for Finnish defense. Importantly, there was no automatism prescribed in the treaty. Finland was only obliged to come to the aid of the USSR in case of an attack through its own territory, which would have already triggered Finnish defenses anyhow and is therefore very different from a traditional mutual defense obligation like NATO’s Article 5.

For North Korea, one can reason in analogous terms. Since China is a great power with a nuclear triad and all possible capabilities of self-defense, the only real danger Beijing faces from the Korean Peninsula is the stationing of hostile nuclear or conventional assets near its southern border, only a few hundred kilometers from major industrial hubs and its own capital city, or from troops that could invade its territory from that flank. There is little hope that the North Korea could come to the help of China in case of a confrontation between Chinese and U.S. navies, nor would its military be useful in the case of a war with India or another distant neighbor. North Korean troops and military assets are of little value to Beijing other than for the defense of hostilities emanating from the territory of the South or the Sea of Japan/East Sea.

To China, North Korea’s strategic value is the buffer function it plays. A change from the current mutual defense treaty to a Finnish-style agreement in which North Korea promises to defend itself and China against attacks through its territory would not only be in line with current North Korean defense policy, but also guarantee China exactly the same benefits that it already enjoys today under the current treaty. Furthermore, a provision like Article 4, that the territory of North Korea can under no future agreement be made part of a hostile alliance to China, would further enhance Chinese security by ensuring that in a reunified Korea, no hostile troops or assets could be stationed in the northern territories.

Such an agreement would not be a change to the status quo; it would not represent a additional security benefit to China. It would, however, enable North Korea to take a decisive step toward a neutral position, compatible with a reunified neutral state.

### **Austriazation of South Korea**

For its part, South Korea could aspire to follow an Austrian model to achieve a neutral position of its own. In 1955, Austria agreed not to join any military alliance and not to allow any foreign military bases on its territory as a condition to regain independence from the four post-war occupation powers. However, there was no ideological neutrality. Austria quickly adopted Western values and started a process of integration in the market economy, which eventually

led to its accession to the European Union in the 1990s. This development was accepted by the Soviet Union, mainly because Austria did not become a member of NATO.

In terms of military capabilities, some neutral countries – foremost Sweden and Switzerland – experimented with the development of nuclear weapons, reasoning that such capabilities would be necessary to independently defend their territories in case of a hostile (Soviet) intervention. Austria, by contrast, quickly became a model for the concept of a Central European Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (NWFZ) – a Polish idea – prescribing military disengagement from the blocs and a nuclear-free status of the participating states.

This concept of a conventionally armed but non-nuclear neutralist state is suitable for the first South Korean step toward security compatibility with the North. It would be based on a change in the current security treaty with the United States on the one hand, and a South Korean pledge concerning nuclear weapons on the other. The treaty change would have to be effected with the U.S. to the extent that the two countries agreed to shift from a reciprocal commitment of mutual defense to a unilateral commitment from the United States toward South Korea, in exchange for the continuous lease of extraterritorial military bases on the peninsula, in the same way, the Japan-U.S. security treaty functions.

A unilateral South Korean commitment to remaining nuclear-free is in line with current U.S. policy that rules out nuclear sharing, the deployment of U.S. tactical nuclear assets to South Korea, or even South Korea developing its own nuclear weapons. Beyond these commitments, South Korea would not have to give up its security ties with the United States or Japan. Procurement of weapons, exchange of military know-how, and even joint maneuvers to maintain interoperability would still be possible and should still take place. The goal would not be to disarm South Korea, just to initiate a neutralist foreign policy that signals future compatibility with that of the North.

### **Step by Step**

Neutralization does not have to be complete from the beginning, as steps toward neutralism can be made without endangering North or South Korean security. Even the denuclearization of the North can be put off until actual unification negotiations start because, under a dual-neutralist framework, North Korea would not yet be pressured to abandon its nuclear capabilities. Likewise, the framework would give time for political and economic rapprochements, be it through working on a federalist future or through a slowly evolving inter-Korean customs union with limited supranational powers, akin to the early European Coal and Steel Community.

A “real” solution can only be negotiated in a process that would have to look similar to the “4+2 Talks,” through which modern Germany was established. In the Korean case, it would be a multilateral process involving the two Koreas plus the United States, China, Russia, and Japan – the members of the erstwhile Six-Party Talks – that would need to agree on a roadmap.

Nevertheless, the separate neutralization of the two Koreas is a step that can precede actual unification talks and could even be initiated by either North or South Korea or in consultation with each other. This has the advantage of giving much more agency to the Koreans in a geopolitical process that, at many crucial junctures, was taken over their heads. These dual processes do not preclude that the steps toward neutrality can happen simultaneously and be coordinated. They should be accompanied by a new dialogue between the North and the South, confidence building, and the resumption of cross-border exchanges.

In the end, a legally binding neutralization of a denuclearized but unified Korean state would be the ultimate goal to realistically solve the security conundrum in the region. China would benefit from these steps first by decreasing its own security commitment to North Korea while maintaining its strategic buffer, which would eventually grow to the entire size of the peninsula.

The United States, too, would gain from this arrangement as it would secure the status quo for as long as the peninsula was not completely neutralized, denuclearized, and politically stable. Once that was achieved, a phased-out troop withdrawal would free up valuable U.S. resources without leaving a power vacuum in Korea. Furthermore, the U.S. presence in Japan would remain unaffected.

To future-proof the agreement from a U.S. perspective, another provision from the Austrian State Treaty can function as a template, since it contained a clause guaranteeing Austria would never again join a union with Germany. For Korea, a similar treaty could expressly prohibit territorial claims of any external power (like China or Russia). In this way, a united peninsula could serve in perpetuity as a buffer zone, the way Switzerland buffered its neighbors for over 200 years.

The Korean Peninsula has always been a geostrategic hotspot. Had it been removed from great power rivalries, that would have benefitted all parties in the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries alike. Maybe a baby-step approach toward neutralization from both ends can finally change the security dynamic.


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## All Activities: International Security and Disarmament

*(click on the activity for more details or use the QR code below)*

November 14 | Dealing with Justice and Peace Issues in Times of War: Credibility of International Law and Conflicts in Sudan and the Middle East 

October 20 | Offene Wunden - Blüten immer wieder ... 

October 18 | Towards a more inclusive global governance: What role for Europe? 

October 9 | Conference: Vienna Peace & Security Talks 2023

September 4 | The BRICS Empowered? 

August 10 | Dual Neutralization as a Pathway to a Denuclearized Korea 

July 15 | The NATO summit in Vilnius - Robert E. Hunter in conversation with Heinz Gärtner 

May 5 | IIP Talk: The OSCE in a time of war - Can the cooperative security be revitalized? 

April 24 | The West and Russia's wars: Why norms and psychology matter just as much as military strength 

March 20 | Österreich hätte alle Voraussetzungen, einen Verhandlungs-Kongress vorzubereiten 

March 20 | Der neue Ost-West-Konflikt 

March 15 | EU Accession and the "Ukraine War" 

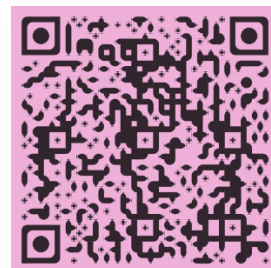
March 6 | Der Westen: Geeint aber isoliert? 

February 24 | What future for the European Peace and Security Communities? 

February 24 | Buchpräsentation und Podiumsdiskussion - „Die USA, der Iran und das Nuklearabkommen“ 

January 3 | Krieg und Frieden 2023 

December 13 | Neutralität und Krieg 



## Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Russia

*Marylia Hushcha*

In 2023, the IIP focused in particular on the South Caucasus region, conducting a study trip to Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, organizing a conference on the region in Vienna, and publishing numerous articles about the three countries on our Peace Blog. Beyond that, we also closely followed developments in other parts of the Eastern Neighborhood, holding several public discussions and recording podcast episodes on issues such as possible developments for the Ukraine war and the sociopolitical situation in Belarus.

The fighting in **Ukraine** continued and intensified in 2023, but the frontline did not significantly move in either direction over the course of the year. The longer the war lasts, the less attainable its stated ends seem to be. This year, attempts to pursue a negotiated solution to the conflict seem to have been abandoned, and the rare diplomatic successes – such as the Black Sea Grain Initiative to transport Ukrainian grain – collapsed. While Ukrainian and Western officials still publicly insist on the full restoration of Ukraine’s territory within its 1991 borders, there are discussions in expert circles about solutions reminiscent of the divided Korean peninsula or divided Germany. Despite a lack of clarity as to the outcome of the war, discussions about the reconstruction of Ukraine intensified in 2023 – perhaps motivated by Ukraine’s candidate status for EU membership and the European Council’s decision in December to open accession talks with the country (as well as with Moldova). Finally, Ukraine’s political leadership has faced more internal disagreements as the war drags on. The conflict between the civilian and military branches of power is growing more apparent.

The Ukraine war has changed the structure of the **Russian** economy and industry, with the shift to a war economy spurring the production of goods, jobs, and income. Russia’s GDP grew in 2023 due to this restructuring, and its further growth is significantly dependent on the continuation of the war. The state continued to punish any criticism of Russia’s ‘special military operation’ this year, with more individuals and organizations declared ‘foreign agents’ and ‘undesirable organizations,’ respectively. Typical prison terms for anti-war charges issued in 2023 varied between 36 to 77 months.<sup>1</sup> Prominent oppositional leaders received extremely long prison terms, with Alexey Navalny sentenced to 19 years. Dissent over how the war in Ukraine is developing was also expressed by some parts of the military, resulting in private military company Wagner Group’s ambitious but short-lived mutiny and the subsequent elimination of its leader Yevgeny Prigozhin. The Russian political regime has thus managed to quell domestic dissent, with President Vladimir Putin confidently announcing in December his decision to run in the 2024 presidential elections. Internationally, the arrest warrant for Putin issued by the International Criminal Court drew the public’s attention to war crimes committed in Ukraine. However, by the end of the year, the newly-erupted war in Gaza overshadowed Russia’s protracted war of attrition in Ukraine in news headlines and Western capitals. As a result, Russia’s bet on waiting it out until international attention ‘dissipates from itself’ seems to have been justified – at least in 2023.<sup>2</sup>

With a human rights and political situation in a state of persistent crisis and with few prospects for change in the near future, **Belarus** was rarely a topic for discussion in the European press

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Coalson (31 December 2023). “How The Russian State Ramped Up The Suppression Of Dissent In 2023: ‘It Worked In The Soviet Union, And It Works Now’”, *Radio Free Europe*;

<https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-suppression-dissent-putin-fear-ukraine-war/32754222.html>

<sup>2</sup> Nikita Smagin (5 December 2023). “Ближневосточное подтверждение. Чего ждет Россия от войны в Газе”, *Carnegie Russia-Eurasia Center*; <https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/91164>

or expert circles in 2023. However, it made international headlines on two occasions this year. First, it was announced that Russian tactical nuclear weapons would be stationed in Belarus – the first time to hold such weapons outside of Russian territory since the 1990s. Second, Aliaksandr Lukashenka allegedly ‘mediated’ a conflict between Wagner Group leader Prigozhin and Russian leadership. As it became clear later with Prigozhin’s demise, whatever the deal (if any) was, it did not last long. Importantly, however, the Wagner Group’s mercenaries were relocated to Belarus, prompting Belarus’ EU neighbors Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania to threaten a complete sealing off of the border if a ‘critical incident’ involving the Wagner troops occurred.

To continue its previous efforts to end its dependence on Russian gas, **Moldova** managed to secure alternative sources of supply from Europe in 2023. To end its indirect dependency on Russia for electricity (supplied from a power plant in Transnistria that operates on Russian gas), Moldova has started building a power interconnection with Romania. Additionally, as shipments of Ukrainian grain via the Black Sea were once again threatened, an alternative rail route was found through Moldovan territory, passing via Transnistria. This led to Ukraine opening its border with Transnistria, which had been closed since Russia’s invasion in 2022. The local elections held in November saw the reform-oriented governing Party of Action and Solidarity take 40% of the vote, failing, however, to win in any major city. Days prior to the elections, the party associated with Moldovan fugitive oligarch Ilan Shor was banned by the Commission for Exceptional Situations. While the decision to ban the party may well be justified by the government’s attempts to rid Moldova of oligarchic influence and promote the rule of law, it did not ‘respect fully the principle of proportionality.’<sup>3</sup> OSCE observes called for a reexamination of the wide-ranging powers granted to the Commission for Exceptional Situations.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, effective tools need to be found to fight vote buying and disinformation – an especially acute problem in Moldova – ahead of the presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled for 2024 and 2025, respectively.

The year 2023 saw an ‘ultimate’ resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between **Armenia** and **Azerbaijan**. In September, Azerbaijan took full control of the breakaway region, choosing to restore its territorial integrity by force and thus ignoring the previous years of negotiations with Armenia. As a result, hardly any ethnic Armenians remain in the region, with the vast majority having fled to Armenia for fear of ethnic cleansing after months of total blockade by Azerbaijan. Armenia fears military incursions by Azerbaijan within its territory – particularly in its Syunik Province – despite Baku’s claims that it has no interest in doing so. In addition, questions about the two countries’ border demarcation as well as the fate of Azerbaijani and Armenian enclaves within each other’s territories remain unresolved. There is very little clarity or inquiry into what will happen after any peace treaty is signed. Such a document would not resolve the remaining issues between Armenia and Azerbaijan. More concrete steps – such as the exchange of prisoners of war between the two countries that took place on December 7 – are more useful in terms of achieving a sustainable peace and reconciliation. Meanwhile, in **Georgia**, political polarization has been on the rise in light of the upcoming parliamentary elections in 2024. In December, the EU decided to grant the country official EU candidate status despite its lack of progress on the previously-set conditions. This move was welcomed by Georgia’s overwhelmingly pro-EU population, but it does not resolve issues surrounding democratic backsliding in the country. The EU will thus need to remain engaged in Georgia if it is serious about the country’s future integration.

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<sup>3</sup> “Republic of Moldova - Joint Follow-up Opinion of the Venice Commission and ODIHR - CDL-AD(2023)048-e”, *Council of Europe* (18 December 2023); [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD\(2023\)048-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD(2023)048-e)

<sup>4</sup> “Moldova’s elections peaceful and efficient, but marred by sweeping restrictive measures amid national security concerns: international observers”, *OSCE* (6 November 2023); <https://www.osce.org/odihr/557427>

## Selected projects

### The EU's Role in the South Caucasus: A Force for Peace?

The South Caucasus is home to several protracted conflicts that have progressed in varying directions over recent years. The September 2020 war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh resulted in a complete victory for Azerbaijan. Opting for force over negotiations, Baku launched another military offensive in September 2023, which led to the mass exodus of ethnic Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh. Meanwhile, in Georgia, political polarization has been on the rise in light of the upcoming parliamentary elections in 2024. On December 14, the European Council granted Georgia candidate status which was welcomed by Georgian people. However, it remains to be seen whether Georgia manages to fulfill conditionalities in order to further progress on the European integration path.

The IIP, in cooperation with partners, organized an expert conference on 27 November 2023 to discuss ongoing developments in the South Caucasus and assess the EU's role in the region.

<b>Date</b>	27 November 2023
<b>Venue</b>	University of Vienna - Skylounge, Oskar-Morgenstern Platz 1, 1090 Vienna
<b>Format</b>	Expert Conference
<b>Partners</b>	Konrad Adenauer Foundation for Multilateral Dialogue, the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies, the City of Vienna, European Commission Representation in Austria

<b>Expert Sessions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict after Baku's Takeover of Nagorno-Karabakh: What's Next?</li> <li>- The Role of Regional Powers in the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict</li> <li>- Georgia's EU-Integration: At a Turning Point?</li> </ul>
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<b>Public panel</b>	The Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict after Baku's Takeover of Nagorno-Karabakh: What's Next?
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Introduction: HANNES SWOBODA, President of the IIP, former MEP

Speakers: SHUJAAT AHMADZADA, Independent researcher; ANNA HESS SARGSYAN, Head of Conflict Resolution at the Austrian Center for Peace; THOMAS DE WAAL, journalist and writer, Senior Fellow with Carnegie Europe; STEFAN MEISTER, Head of the Center for Order and Governance in Eastern Europe, Russia, and Central Asia at the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP)

Moderator: STEPHANIE FENKART, Director of the IIP

<b>Conference materials</b>	Available at: <a href="https://www.iipvienna.com/the-eus-role-in-the-south-caucasus-a-force-for-peace">https://www.iipvienna.com/the-eus-role-in-the-south-caucasus-a-force-for-peace</a>
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## Study Trip to the South Caucasus

After the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the interest in the South Caucasus in the EU in general and in Austria in particular has grown due to geopolitical transformations there caused by Russia's weaker presence (but not a complete withdrawal). With the aim to strengthen its focus on the region, the IIP board members and team have conducted a study trip to Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia in order to inform themselves about the region's political, security and economic realities, and possibilities for a stronger EU engagement in conflict management/resolution processes.

**Date** 3 – 10 September 2023

**Participants** HANNES SWOBODA; ANGELA KANE; STEPHANIE FENKART; MARYLIA HUSHCHA; ELENE GAGNIDZE

**Report**

Available at: <https://www.iipvienna.com/news-reports-publications/2023/10/2/iips-study-trip-to-the-south-caucasus-photo-report>



## Buchpräsentation: Edgar Morin - Von Krieg zu Krieg

Im Alter von über 101 Jahren hat der bekannte französische Philosoph und Soziologe Edgar Morin diese Warnschrift verfasst, in der er seine Erfahrungen mit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg und all den Kriegen und Konflikten, die er in seinem langen Leben studiert hat, verdichtet. Er warnt leidenschaftlich vor der Dynamik des Krieges, die ab einem bestimmten Punkt unaufhaltsam werden könnte, und lenkt unsere Aufmerksamkeit auf die Suche nach Friedenswegen. Denn es gilt: »Je mehr der Krieg sich verschärft, desto schwieriger wird der Frieden, aber desto dringender ist er.«

»Wie Romain Rolland zu seiner Zeit steht Edgar Morin jenseits allen Hasses, um eine Zukunft zu denken, die vom Fluch des Krieges befreit ist. Er fordert uns auf, klar und energisch für einen gerechten und dauerhaften Frieden in Europa zu handeln. Daher kann man die Lektüre dieses Buches, das weder pessimistisch noch optimistisch, sondern zutiefst realistisch ist, nur empfehlen.« *Alain Refalo*

In einem Gespräch mit Stephanie Fenkart hat Werner Wintersteiner das Buch „Edgar Morin – Von Krieg zu Krieg“ vorgestellt und diskutiert. Das Werk wurde von ihm – gemeinsam mit Wilfrid Graf – herausgegeben und übersetzt.

Date	20 April 2023
Format	Book presentation
Speaker	WERNER WINTERSTEINER, Prof., Friedenspädagoge, Gründer und ehemaliger Leiter, des "Zentrums für Friedensforschung und Friedensbildung" an der Alpen-Adria-Universität (AAU) Klagenfurt
Moderator	STEPHANIE FENKART, Director of the IIP



## All Activities: Eastern Europe, South Caucasus, and Russia

*(click on the activity for more details or use the QR code below)*

December 19 | No silver bullet for peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan 

November 27 | Conference: The EU's Role in the South Caucasus: A Force for Peace?

November 9 | Ukraine and the Allies: Keeping the Firm Rock Unity and Solidarity 

October 17 | Ukraine and the European Union - A common Future? 

October 12 | Turkish Foreign Policy in the South Caucasus: What Does Baku's Takeover of Nagorno-Karabakh Mean for Ankara? 

September 27 | Wie Österreich einen Kompromiss in Bergkarabach vorantreiben könnte 

September 14 | Georgia - A bumpy Road towards the EU 

September 3-10 | IIP's Study Trip to the South Caucasus: Photo Report

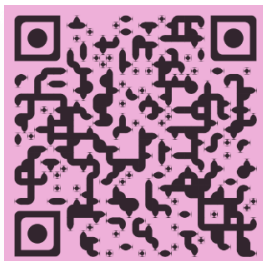
June 6 | The War in Ukraine and its Impact on Chechnya 

June 1 | Conditions for Peace between Ukraine and Russia 

April 20 | Buchpräsentation: Edgar Morin - Von Krieg zu Krieg 

February 20 | 1 Jahr Krieg: Wie kommen wir zu Frieden 

January 16 | "Reshaping" of critical regional infrastructure under the impact of war: The case of Ukraine, Russia, and the EU 





## The Western Balkans Initiative

*Luka Cekic*

The year 2023 marked the second anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Not only has this war reshaped the international order, but it has deeply shaken the countries of the Western Balkans in particular. The struggling economies and fragile democracies of the region's six countries are currently undergoing one of the greatest challenges they have yet faced. Their economies were weak even before the war, and the low purchasing power of their citizens is now in further decline. The countries' political systems are struggling to fight the economic fallout of the conflict. Furthermore, democracy in these countries – just as in the EU – is not immune to emerging right-wing populists and their nationalist agendas. This poses a great risk of inflaming new conflicts across the region, as the reconciliation process after the Yugoslav Wars was far from complete. Even before the Ukraine war, the region experienced competing influences from both the West (the US, the UK, and the EU) and the East (mainly Russia, China, and Turkey). Now, as a result of the war, the region is being torn between these competing influences – especially Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, where Russian and Chinese influences remain strong. Even while the EU seems to have finally realized the importance of the Western Balkans and the region's EU integration, the prospects remain uncertain. All these issues continue to polarize Western Balkan societies and threaten their long-overdue democratic transitions. Will the countries of the region successfully weather this storm, or will the region experience a collective regression to its own difficult and dark past?

In order to support the Western Balkan countries in combatting these and other important issues, the International Institute for Peace maintained its active engagement in the region in 2023 through the “Young Generation for the New Western Balkans 2030” framework (this year also marked the fifth anniversary of the initiative). This year, our activities were mainly focused on Kosovo and Serbia, but we also visited the region in June in order to mark 20 years since the 2003 Thessaloniki Summit, which affirmed the Western Balkans' future within the EU and emphasized a look towards the future. The IIP visited Dubrovnik, Tirana, Lezhe, Pristina, and Mitrovica with a focus on engaging with young people and addressing issues within the respective local communities. The overall topic of this trip was to cover the results and effects of the Thessaloniki Summit, the future of the EU integration of the Western Balkans, and how young people evaluate this process.

At the very beginning of 2023, we marked 15 years since Kosovo's independence. The youngest democracy in the region is still fighting for international recognition – including by five EU member states. Furthermore, mutual recognition with Serbia is still a contested topic for the new country – only when this issue is solved can both Kosovo and Serbia undertake full EU integration and reconciliation. Until then, both countries will continue to struggle economically and lack political stability, which has resulted in young people leaving the region and seeking opportunities elsewhere. The year started with the Ohrid Agreement in March, which promised to pave the path toward the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina, combined with elements of mutual recognition. However, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic stated that he did not sign anything, while EU representatives affirmed that the oral agreement was equivalent to a signed agreement. Shortly thereafter, local elections were boycotted in April by the Serb population in northern Kosovo, who were under pressure by Srpska Lista not to participate in the elections. This resulted in a turnout of 3,47%, and ethnic Albanian mayors were elected in all four municipalities. In May, Kosovar police took control of the municipal buildings, and violent protests erupted, which involved KFOR peacekeepers. Afterwards,

Kosovo affirmed that it would reduce the special police force in front of the municipal buildings and promised a new mayoral election in the northern municipalities. In September, an attack was carried out by Serb militants in Banjska, killing one Kosovar policeman and three attackers – once again demonstrating the potential threat of a major conflict. In conclusion, the normalization process between Serbia and Kosovo continued to stall in 2023, and there is a threat of continued violence and further deterioration of the overall situation if a political solution cannot be found.

In March of this year, the IIP looked to the past, remembering the late Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic, who was assassinated in March 2003. Many consider this to be the turning point in Serbia's transition and democratization process. Today's political and social atmosphere in Serbia resembles that of the nineties, when Serbia was involved in the brutal Yugoslav Wars and was shaped by nationalist and populist policies. The country's progress toward EU accession is stalling, inflation is taking a toll on the public, and Russian influence and propaganda are at an ever-higher level. In May, Serbia was struck by two enormous tragedies that occurred in less than 48 hours – a school shooting in Belgrade and a mass shooting in central Serbia, which resulted in 17 people dead and 21 injured. This set off waves of protests against violence within Serbia. Parliamentary and local elections in Belgrade in December were shaped by enormous irregularities, and international observers raised concerns over the elections' legitimacy. Vucic's ruling SNS party claimed victory, but the opposition, which managed to unite in one large coalition, still lacked the capacity to win a majority in either parliament or Belgrade. Members of the European Parliament (EP) who observed the elections pushed for a resolution that was adopted by the EP calling for an investigation into the elections. This shows that the EU is better appreciating its mission and importance in Serbia and that it is ready to regain lost trust and take action. The EU's active engagement in Serbia could counter the growing influence of Russia and China while also fostering the country's transition and democratization process – all of which is crucial for a divided country and a polarized society.

As we navigate through these uncertain times, the Western Balkans stand at a pivotal moment. The choices made in the coming years will set the course for the future of the region. It is time for concerted efforts, both within the region and through international partnerships, to steer these countries towards a more stable, democratic, and prosperous future.

## Selected projects

### New/Old Extremism and Nationalism in Southeastern Europe: A Threat to Europe and Democracy?

The event shed light on Hikmet Karcic's research on the genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the presence of far-right symbols, and the nationalism/extremism in the Southeastern European region, with a particular focus on its implications for the European Union. The discussion delved into the complex dynamics shaping the region and the EU, shedding light on the historical context of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian genocide, the resurgence of right-wing extremism, and the overall political situation. It also explored how these factors affect the broader European landscape, emphasizing the EU's role and its interests in Southeastern Europe, but also the upcoming 2024 EU Parliament elections.

Hikmet Karčić is a genocide and Holocaust researcher based in Sarajevo. He was named the Auschwitz Institute-Keene State College Global Fellow of the Year in 2017 and has extensively written about genocide denial and crime prevention. In the region, he is regarded as a leading expert in these fields.

His book, 'Torture, Humiliate, Kill: Inside the Bosnian Serb Camp System' (University of Michigan Press), was published in March 2022. It addresses the collective traumas experienced by the non-Serb population in concentration camps during the war, including the excessive use of torture, sexual abuse, humiliation, and killing. The physical and psychological suffering caused by these methods was seen as a rapid and efficient means to establish the 'Serbian living space.' The book focuses on several examples of experiences in concentration camps in four cities operated by the Bosnian Serbs during the war: Prijedor, Bijeljina, Višegrad, and Bileća.

Date	5 October 2023
Format	Panel discussion
Panelists	HIKMET KARCIC, Researcher at University of Sarajevo; DENNIS MISKIC, Journalist; INGRID STEINER-GASHI, Head of Foreign Affairs Department & Former EU Correspondent, Kurier
Moderation	STEPHANIE FENKART, Director of the IIP





## 20 Years since the Thessaloniki Summit: How are the Western Balkans doing now?

The IIP visited the Western Balkans region in June 2023 in order to mark 20 years since the Thessaloniki Western Balkans-EU Summit and to look toward the future. Dubrovnik, Tirana, Lezhe, Pristina & Mitrovica were visited with a focus on engaging young people and addressing issues within the respective local communities. The overall topic of this trip was to cover the results and effects of the 2003 Thessaloniki Summit, the future of EU-Integration of Western Balkans, and how the youth looks up to this process.

Date	8 – 11 Juni 2023
Format	Study trip
Participants	HANNES SWOBODA; STEPHANIE FENKART; LUKA CEKIC; ADNAN CERIMAGIC
Outputs	Available at: <a href="https://www.iipvienna.com/20-years-since-the-thessaloniki-summit">https://www.iipvienna.com/20-years-since-the-thessaloniki-summit</a>



## The unfulfilled Brussels Agreement

Date	12 January 2023
Format	Blog article
Author	HANNES SWOBODA, President of the IIP, former MEP

In December last year, I argued optimistically in my blog “A New Start for the Western Balkans?” that there will be some progress towards the region’s EU accession as a “collateral benefit” of the war in Ukraine<sup>5</sup>. However, there is one issue that is of great concern for all those who desire to bring the Western Balkans closer to the EU: the ongoing conflict between Kosovo and Serbia - particularly concerning the Serbs of northern Kosovo.

A recent report by the International Institute for Middle Eastern and Balkan Studies (IFIMES) in Slovenia stated: “Over the past several years there was a noticeable absence of EU- mediated dialogue between official Belgrade and Pristina.” It added: “The responsibility does not rest just with the participants in the dialogue but also with the EU and the entire international community.”<sup>6</sup> It is extremely sad and disappointing that this conflict is once again resurfacing while the EU remains unable to resolve it.

The history of Serbia’s domination of Kosovo still greatly impacts the present. In particular, the repressive policies of the Milosevic regime and Kosovo’s struggle for independence with NATO’s support have generated different and often antagonistic images in the minds of Kosovar Albanians and Serbs. It is too soon to expect a common evaluation or a mutual understanding of what happened in the 1990s, as this would demand a long-term strategy. However, there is no readiness yet to build the foundation for a future where all citizens and communities can live together peacefully. Reconciliation is not truly on the agenda for any of the parties involved. Even if I would strongly agree with those who assign the predominant blame to Kosovar Serbs, Kosovar Albanians must also take several steps to move towards a genuinely multiethnic society.

### How to make integration work

There are two general approaches to creating the conditions for the fruitful cohabitation of different ethnic groups. One is to give all individual citizens the same rights and opportunities. This is certainly the clearest and most basic way to integrate all citizens into the structures of a given state and society, as it guarantees equal individual rights for all citizens. Citizens are treated equally irrespective of their religion or ethnicity and can take full advantage of their rights.

But in countries where groups that differ - by ethnicity, language, or religion - have competing narratives and/or historical perspectives, the concept of individual rights may not be sufficient. This is especially true if one group has close cultural links to a neighboring country that are guaranteed by special constitutional provisions. Indeed, nationalist links and biased constitutional arrangements can be conducive to separation, rather than integration, and this is particularly true if the leaders of the minority are less oriented to integration and more oriented to keeping close ties to other countries. However, denying autonomy or specific rights for a given minority does not necessarily help integration either.

<sup>5</sup> Hannes Swoboda (13 December 2022). “A New Start for the Western Balkans?”, *International Institute for Peace* <https://www.iipvienna.com/new-blog/2022/12/13/a-new-start-for-the-western-balkans>

<sup>6</sup> “2023 Kosovo: Implementation of Brussels and Washington agreements - Path to Enduring Peace and Long-term Stability”, *IFIMES*, Available at: <https://bit.ly/3I5QDKI>

Kosovar Prime Minister Albin Kurti argues strongly for the individual citizen principle, but in doing so, he neglects Kosovo's complex history. He views the country's history entirely from the Albanian perspective - the side of the victims of Serbian aggression. This perspective is understandable, but to build a common state, a respect for the interests of all minority groups is essential, even if those groups have in the past been part of a dominating or oppressive majority.

Needless to say, it would be helpful if the representatives of that minority would learn from the past and acknowledge their own failures and crimes. Unfortunately, the leadership of Kosovo's Serb community does not view the past in an open or constructive way. They do not understand that they too must take decisive steps towards reconciliation. On the contrary, they display no interest in integration into Kosovar society. The leadership's destructive attitudes are often supported by Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic, and on occasion they even take advantage of him when trying to preserve and build their own parastate in northern Kosovo.

### **Collective rights as a part of integration**

One way of granting the Serb community collective rights would be through the creation of a Community of Serb Municipalities, which was envisioned in the 2013 Brussels Agreement. One complicating factor for the implementation of the Agreement stemmed from the decision by Kosovo's Constitutional Court that some details of the Agreement were unconstitutional. Kurti's government took this decision as a justification not to fulfill the Brussels Agreement. However, one important step forward would be to adapt the Agreement to the objections of the Court rather than cancelling the creation of the Community of Serb Municipalities altogether.

The truth is that neither side has had any interest in implementing the Brussels Agreement in word or spirit or working to build a more inclusive Kosovo. The Serb leadership in northern Kosovo is not helpful in fostering the conditions for peaceful cohabitation, while the Kosovar government continues to insist on the principle of individual rights and reject collective rights, especially in the form of the Community of Serb Municipalities.

Ten years after the Brussels Agreement, it is time to fully implement its provisions and pave the way for a new chapter. Kosovo's progress towards EU integration as well as domestic integration - including the creation of the Community of Serb Municipalities - must be embedded in a comprehensive policy of building new bridges between all parts of Kosovar society. Dealing openly with the past and looking for ways to approach Kosovo's future inside the EU is the only viable way forward. Insisting on one's own position instead of finding a compromise will not yield any results; there is no viable future for Kosovo without some community rights for Serbs.

The implementation of such rights can and should be accompanied by active policies for integration. Kosovar Serbs should not only learn about the glories of Serbian history, and Kosovar Albanians should not only learn about "their" history. This remains one of the largest unsolved issues in the region: education based on nationalist narratives and principles. Nationalist attitudes that impede political solutions are too often cultivated in the classroom. Ethnic and religious loyalties cannot be abolished overnight and must therefore be respected. However, they should also be embedded into a wider and critical view of historic events that leads to a common European future.

### **The EU must insist**

The EU must insist on implementing the Brussels Agreement - even in an adapted form - ten

years after its conclusion. In addition, it must actively implement a strategy of reconciliation between Kosovo's different communities, between Kosovo and Serbia, and in the wider region. To speak about reconciliation in Ukraine today would be grotesque, although it too will have to be discussed someday. In the Western Balkans, however, it must remain high on the agenda - with Kosovo as a prime example.

## All Activities: The Western Balkans Initiative

*(click on the activity for more details or use the QR code below)*

October 14 | New/Old Extremism and Nationalism in Southeastern Europe: A Threat to Europe and Democracy? 🎬

October 11-13 | Belgrade Security Conference 2023: Youth Perspectives on the EU 🎬

June | 20 Years since the Thessaloniki Summit - How are the Western Balkans doing now?

May 31 | Serbien vs. Kosovo: Warum die Lage eskaliert 🎧

March 23 | Ohrid Talks and Serbia's Geopolitical Dilemma 🎧

March 7 | Zoran Djindjic's Legacy & Serbia's Never-ending Transition 🎬

March 2 | The Mini Schengen Initiative: The Western Balkans Going Against the Odds 🎧

February 24 | Kosovo: 15 Years of Independence 🎬

February 8 | Kosovo - Unabhängig aber unvollendet 🎧

January 12 | Kosovo - The unfulfilled Brussels Agreement 🎧





## EU and Austria

*Hannes Swoboda*

What is Europe? It is a concept both diverse and fluid. Even geographically, Europe has no clear or commonly-defined borders, neither economic nor political. Increasingly, the EU – as it stands today as well as its future vision of an ever-wider union – has come to represent Europe. But it remains open to different interpretations. What does seem clear and widely-accepted is the fact that the EU is confronted with increasing challenges.

Both the war in Ukraine as well as the resumed war – or perhaps wars – in the Middle East are at the center of these challenges. As most EU member states are also members of NATO – particularly given the accession of Finland and, most likely, Sweden, despite Hungary’s final holdout – the question of a European defence policy has gained new traction. In addition, the EU and NATO are confronted with great uncertainty due to the upcoming elections in the US. What will be the US attitude specifically towards the Ukraine war and in general towards defence in and of the EU?

For the remaining neutral, non-NATO EU member states such as Austria, defining their position towards the potential build-up of European defence capacities is growing more urgent. The question of neutrality is different when we think about the “old fashioned” East-West conflict or about an aggression by Russia against an independent neighbor, especially if the attacked country would be an EU member state. How far should and must solidarity go in this case? For the time being, it is in the utmost interest of Austria for Russia’s aggression to be pushed back and for Ukraine to be reconfirmed as an independent country on its path to joining the EU. Neutrality can be more easily preserved and gain wider recognition if aggressors see that there is no chance to win through waging war and if peace is reestablished in Europe.

Another issue affecting Europe is EU enlargement. Russia’s war against Ukraine and its threats against Moldova have brought new life to the enlargement debate. Ukraine, Moldova, and potentially Georgia have been invited to join the EU. In connection with these invitations, the countries of the Western Balkans have also received more positive messages of late. The year 2030 has been named as the target for accession. Nevertheless, a large number of issues must still be resolved in each candidate country, and the EU itself must improve its capacity to integrate new members. The idea of a staged, step-by-step integration into the EU has been increasingly promoted to address the stalemate of the accession process.

Another vital issue for the future and success of the EU is its relationship with the Global South. Some look at this relationship solely from a perspective of migration. According to this view, migration policy – or really, anti-migration policy – should define Europe’s position towards our neighborhood and particularly Africa. However, more pragmatic approaches emphasize the urgency of defining a coordinated climate policy. Other approaches – partly connected with climate change – are defined by the need for the EU to compete with China’s Belt and Road Initiative. Russia’s activities in some countries of the Global South are also of concern, especially for the EU’s fight against terrorism. All these elements are of the utmost importance for European stability and development. A comprehensive and open-minded policy towards the Global South – and especially towards our neighboring continent Africa – is important to give European countries and their values a global reach despite the decreasing economic and demographic importance of our “old” continent.



## Selected projects

### Österreichische Sicherheitspolitik & Neutralität – Optionen für die Zukunft

Europa ist am 24.02.2022 in einer Zeitenwende aufgewacht, der sich auch Österreich nicht entziehen kann. Nur hierzulande kam dies bisher noch nicht richtig an. Politische Debatten über die Thematik werden oft unter dem Deckmantel der Neutralität gestoppt. Wie kann sich eine kleine Nation wie Österreich in dieser neuen Welt schützen? Wie sollte eine moderne Sicherheitspolitik aussehen? Reicht es, das Bundesheer (wieder) erstarben zu lassen oder muss die Neutralität adaptiert oder sogar an sich in Frage gestellt werden? Wie sehr zählt die Argumentation, man sei sicher, da man von NATO-Ländern umgeben sei, in einer Welt, in der hybride Angriffe keine Grenzen kennen? Was passiert, wenn die USA, wie bereits unter Präsident Donald Trump, drohen, den über Europa gespannten Sicherheitsschirm einzuziehen?

Date	13 June 2023
Format	Panel discussion
Moderator	ARMIN ARBEITER, Kurier
Speakers	FRANZ CEDE, Politikwissenschaftler und Diplomat a.D. FRIEDHELM FRISCHENSCHLAGER, Verteidigungsminister a.D., Mitglied der Parlamentarischen Bundesheerkommission HEINZ GÄRTNER, Politikwissenschaftler, International Institute for Peace JESSICA GRÜN, Vorsitzende von Women in International Security Austria und Expertin für Sicherheitspolitik HEIDI MAUER, Donau-Universität Krems



## Zum 180. Geburtstag von Bertha von Suttner: Gedanken zu Krieg und Frieden

Am 9. Juni wäre der 180. Geburtstag der österreichischen Friedensnobelpreisträgerin Bertha von Suttner. Suttner kämpfte zeitlebens für Abrüstung und Frieden, aber auch gegen überholte Konventionen und die Unterdrückung von Frauen. Mit der Rückkehr des russischen Krieges gegen die Ukraine hat sich die grundlegende Annahme, dass Kriege zwischen Staaten in Europa der Vergangenheit angehören, wieder radikal verändert. Welche Gedanken zu Krieg und Frieden herrschen heute? Was hat sich verändert, was bleibt gleich? Welche Rolle kommt heute Frauen in Konflikten zu? Was müssen wir für die Zukunft beachten? Was können wir lernen?

**Date** 1 June 2023  
**Format** Panel discussion  
**Moderation** STEPHANIE FENKART, Director of the IIP

**Speakers** WERNER WINTERSTEINER, Univ.-Prof. i. R,  
 Friedenspädagoge, Gründer und ehemaliger Leiter, des  
 "Zentrums für Friedensforschung und Friedensbildung" an der  
 Alpen-Adria-Universität (AAU) Klagenfurt  
 SASKIA STACHOWITSCH, Senior Research Fellow, CEU  
 RITA GLAVITZA, Austrian Development Agency,  
 Fachreferentin für Friedensförderung und Konfliktprävention  
 CHRISTINA FAUSTIK, Offizier beim Österreichischen  
 Bundesheer



## Sieben Punkte zur österreichischen Sicherheit: Perspektive und Friedensförderung

Date	8 May 2023
Format	Position Paper
Authors	STEPHANIE FENKART, Director of the IIP; MORITZ EHRMANN, Director of the Austrian Centre for Peace

Als Leiter\*innen von österreichischen Friedensinstituten möchten wir mit unserer Erfahrung und Expertise zu einer breiteren Debatte für eine neue österreichische Sicherheitsstrategie beitragen. Wir definieren Frieden als über die Abwesenheit von Krieg hinausgehenden Zustand, als Zustand, in dem die umfassende Sicherheit des Menschen gewährleistet sein kann. Unsere Arbeit definiert sich als von einer vielschichtigen und komplexen Realität definiert und auf praktische Wirkung ausgerichtet. Für die Entwicklung einer neuen österreichischen Sicherheitsstrategie schlagen wir sieben Punkte vor: 1. Sicherheit muss umfassend als menschliche Sicherheit (mit ökonomischen, sozialen, ökologischen und menschenrechtlichen Dimensionen) gedacht sein, wie bereits in der existierenden Sicherheitsstrategie beschrieben. Als Teil davon muss Österreichs Sicherheit militärisch gewährleistet sein, auch gemäß der Verpflichtung die Neutralität Österreichs verteidigen zu können. Ebenso hat sich Österreich durch den EU Vertrag zur europäischen Solidarität verpflichtet. Eine Konzentration der Debatte auf rein militärische Aspekte greift aber zu kurz, da ein rein auf militärischer Abschreckung basiertes System weder ein nachhaltiger noch ein wünschenswerter Zustand ist. 2. Die Entwicklung einer österreichischen Sicherheitsstrategie sollte sich durch ein aktives Engagement für Frieden im Inneren und Äußeren durch friedliche Mittel definieren, orientiert an der Wahrung der europäischen Werte und des Völkerrechts. Als einer der wenigen verbliebenen neutralen europäischen Staaten sehen wir das größte Potenzial für die Stärkung der österreichischen Sicherheit in einem solchen Ansatz. Dieser verfolgt ebenso das Ziel die Legitimität der österreichischen Neutralität zu stärken. 3. Daher sollte vor allem das geschichtlich zu wenig genutzte Potenzial der Friedensvermittlung durch eine proaktive Neutralitätspolitik ausgeschöpft werden. Die Mediationsfazilität im Außenministerium ist ein gutes Mittel dafür und sollte, wie in vergleichbaren europäischen Staaten ausgebaut werden. Der Raum für österreichische Friedensvermittlung besteht trotz des Krieges in der Ukraine weiter, wie die Erfahrung unserer praktischen Arbeit auf internationaler Ebene eindeutig beweist. 4. Die Bedrohung durch die Klimakrise wird an Relevanz viele andere Sicherheitsrisiken übertreffen und verlangt Antworten im Inland und im Ausland. Vor allem Konfliktländer können mit den Auswirkungen der Klimakrise kaum umgehen, was in Form von Instabilität, Migration und Radikalisierung Österreich und Europa direkt betrifft. Österreich sollte durch die innerösterreichische Beschleunigung der Energiewende zur Stabilisierung des Weltklimas beitragen und gleichzeitig das strategische Ziel der Energie-Souveränität verwirklichen. Zugleich sollte Österreich mit Nachdruck Programme zur Klimawandel-Anpassung verbunden mit Konfliktverhütungsansätzen fördern. 5. Frauen sollten im Prozess der Ausarbeitung der Sicherheitsstrategie gleichberechtigt mitwirken, und die besonderen Sicherheitsbedürfnisse von Frauen sollten im Inhalt der Sicherheitsstrategie im Einklang mit bestehenden UNO-Resolutionen, berücksichtigt werden. 6. Das Austrian Centre for Peace wird im Juli mit österreichischen und internationalen Expert\*innen im Rahmen des Austrian Forum for Peace die konkreten Potenziale für Friedensvermittlung durch einen neutralen europäischen Staat erörtern. Die Ergebnisse werden als Beitrag für die Entwicklung der österreichischen Sicherheitsstrategie veröffentlicht. 7. Die Vielschichtigkeit und Komplexität unserer Realitäten anerkennend sehen wir einen transparenten, partizipativen und dialogischen Ansatz bei der Entwicklung der österreichischen Sicherheitsstrategie unbedingt notwendig und bieten dafür unsere Erfahrung und Dienste an.

## All Activities: EU and Austria

December 15 | Enlargement: Towards a New EU Strategy?

October 30 | On the EU's Frontline: Outcomes from Poland's 2023 Parliamentary Elections 

September 26 | Europa und die neue Welt(un)ordnung 

August 21 | Wohin Treibt's Europa? - Teil 4: Europa und das Mittelmeer 

August 14 | Wohin Treibt's Europa? - Teil 3: Europa und die USA 

August 11 | Wohin Treibt's Europa? - Teil 2: Europa und der Rest 

August 9 | Wohin Treibt's Europa? - Teil 1: Auf dem Weg zur Verteidigungsunion? 

July 27 | "Diese Raketen sind nicht nur ein Schutz" 

July 7 | Friedensvermittlung in der Klimakrise als Notwendigkeit für die österreichische Sicherheit 


June 13 | Österreichische Sicherheitspolitik & Neutralität – Optionen für die Zukunft 

June 9 | Zum 180. Geburtstag von Bertha von Suttner: Gedanken zu Krieg und Frieden 

June 6 | Ö1 Europa Journal - Europagespräch: Wie neutral ist Österreich eigentlich noch? 

May 8 | Sieben Punkte zur österreichischen Sicherheit: Perspektive der Friedensförderung 

April 5 | Hat Neutralität eine Zukunft? 

March 20 | Veraltetes Konzept oder wichtiger denn je: Schützt die Neutralität Österreich vor Krieg? 

March 12 | Gender Equality in the European Union: Past and Present 

March 12 | Kultur in Zeiten von De-kolonialisierung und Globalisierung 

February 20 | Europas Herausforderung - Ein Jahr Krieg gegen die Ukraine 

## Middle East

*Heinz Gärtner*

### **A Palestinian State and A Ceasefire Would Reduce Tensions in the Middle East**

This text discusses the recent conflict between Hamas and Israel, highlighting the current complexities and tensions in the Middle East.

#### **The Hamas attack**

The October 7th terrorist attack against Israel launched by Hamas from Gaza, which left 1200 Israeli civilians and military personnel dead, revealed many conflict lines in the Middle East that had lain covered up or papered over. Israel's seventy-five-year occupation or blockade of the Palestinian territories has left grievances and unhealed wounds. Promises of a Palestinian state have proved to be empty. Moreover, several Arab states (the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan) entered into a process of "normalization" with Israel in 2020 while ignoring Palestinian rights and wishes. Saudi Arabia was also in negotiations to normalize its own relations with Israel if some conditions were met, including strong security guarantees by the US, a peaceful nuclear program, and a missile defense system. However, Hamas' terrorist attack and the subsequent war put a halt to these talks.

#### **Israel's war**

Israel reacted to Hamas' attack according to its own methods and with its own goals. In its military campaign, Israel began not only to destroy Hamas' infrastructure in Gaza but also civilian infrastructure, leaving 30.000 casualties and two million people displaced. Gaza has become increasingly uninhabitable. Since then, South Africa has brought a case before the International Court of Justice accusing Israel of committing genocide. After stressing Israel's "right of self-defense" against Hamas, the US requested that Israel not pursue the following goals: depopulation, the forceful displacement of Gazans, re-occupation, blockades, or the redrawing of borders. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu did not accept a single one of these requests and has also rejected a two-state solution. He seeks Israeli control over all territories, including the West Bank and Gaza. This suggests the continuation of the war and no ceasefire. The US has held back from using its leverage (e.g. aid and military assistance) to force a solution, while the EU does not have the leverage to "impose" a two-state solution, as High Representative Josep Borrell suggested. The US has used its leverage in the past, however, when it put pressure on Israel, France, and the UK during the 1956 Suez Crisis to withdraw their forces from Egypt.

#### **Lebanon and Yemen**

As other members of the so-called "Axis of Resistance" in addition to Hamas, Hezbollah in Lebanon has reacted to the war with military strikes on northern Israel and the Houthis in Yemen with strikes on Israel-bound ships in the Red Sea. In turn, the US and the UK have retaliated with strikes from aircraft carriers in the Red Sea and bombers setting off from international bases (e.g. Cyprus).

Iran, meanwhile, is in a delicate position. It feels obliged to support the Houthis and Hezbollah with aid and weapons but tries to not get involved directly in the conflict itself, even though



Israel has hit Iranian-backed militias in Syria and Iraq. This tit-for-tat could at some point spiral out of hand. The US must call on Israel not to provoke a broader war, and Iran should hold back its allies from inciting a conflagration in the region. However, Israel is certain that, at the end of the day, the US will not abandon it, just as Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan coerced the US during the 1973 Yom Kippur War to get its support – otherwise it would threaten attacking Arab States with nuclear weapons.

### **Iran's predicament in the Middle East**

Three US soldiers were killed and dozens injured in a drone attack on a US base on the Jordanian-Syrian border at the end of January 2024. President Biden has announced retaliation. Members of the US Congress have blamed Iran for the attack, while Iran has denied involvement. Instead, the Islamic Resistance group has claimed responsibility, purporting to have carried out over 150 attacks against American facilities since October 7th, 2023.

In fact, Iran supports many militias and non-state groups in the region, which are intended to serve as its external line of defense. These include Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and the Houthis in Yemen as well as various militias in Syria and Iraq. Since the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7th and the ongoing bombardment of Gaza by Israel, these groups have carried out attacks in the Red Sea, Syria, and Iraq. Nevertheless, Iran has repeatedly emphasized that these groups are completely independent in their actions.

This distancing cannot be dismissed out of hand, as Iran does not want to be drawn into a major war with Israel or the US. Iran also reacted cautiously when Israel killed members of its Revolutionary Guards and its allies, including high-ranking officers, in Iraq and Syria in December 2023. Following the terrorist attack in the southern Iranian city of Kerman that killed around 90 civilians, for which the Islamic State claimed responsibility, there were several Iranian retaliatory strikes on positions of anti-Iranian groups in Syria and Iraq, including on an alleged Israeli intelligence post in Erbil, Iraq, in mid-January 2024.

Iran is thus in a predicament: on the one hand, it depends on its militias of the "Axis of Resistance," but on the other hand, these groups are growing more independent. Within Iran, voices are increasingly warning that Iranians must not pay the price for arming foreign militias. Even Iran's Supreme Leader has prescribed "strategic patience" to his armed forces in order to avoid a confrontation with the US.

But the US also wants to avoid a direct confrontation with Iran. In fact, US intelligence services have warned Iran against a major regional war. In return, Iran has let the US know that it has no interest in a wider conflict. The question is how long Iran can respond to Israeli attacks only with announcements of retaliation. If there were a direct attack by Israel on Iran, Iran would be faced with the decision to respond with a direct military attack on Israeli territory. This, in turn, would inevitably force the US to come to the military assistance of its ally Israel, as Israel would argue that its very existence is at risk. This would inevitably lead to a protracted war, as Iran is four times the size of Iraq, with twice the population and more disciplined armed forces.

In summary, this suggests that even if the US and Iran shy away from a direct military confrontation, there is a real danger that their allies will risk setting off a regional conflagration anyways.

## **The Arab Peace Initiative**

As long as a viable Palestinian state has not been established, tensions will remain across the Middle East. Arab states should reset the “normalization” process and make the recognition of Israel in its 1967 borders a precondition. This would entail a revival of the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, which demanded “land-for-peace.” Moreover, Iran must make up its mind and join this initiative. A good basis would be the Saudi-Iran agreement that was brokered by China. After all, Iran recognized a two-state solution when it voted for the UN General Assembly resolution on the “cessation of hostilities” in Gaza in December 2023, where this request was enshrined. In addition, Iran supported the statement of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation that included a two-state solution. In the wake of these peace processes, steps to revive some elements of the nuclear agreement (JCPOA) could be established, such as the freezing of Iran’s uranium-enrichment, the un-freezing of Iranian assets abroad, closer cooperation between Iran and International Atomic Energy Agency to solve the outstanding issues of contaminated particles, and the exchange of prisoners.

In summary, this text outlines the complexities surrounding the current conflicts in the Middle East, potential solutions, and the involvement of various regional and global actors.

## Selected projects

### Israel's Domestic and International Challenges on its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary: Tectonic Shifts and Policy Dilemmas

Israelis are celebrating their country's 75th anniversary in a time of turmoil. From domestic political disarray to new regional dynamics, the country is experiencing unprecedented challenges.

To shed some light on these issues, our two guest experts explored the tectonic shifts that have occurred in Israeli society and politics and examined how these changes have given rise to the current state of affairs. In addition, the panel discussed the transitions between old and new forces and how they interact, as well as the country's social trends alongside regional and international policies under the current right-wing government.

Date	27 April 2023
Format	Panel discussion
Moderator	HANNES SWOBODA, President of the IIP and former MEP
Speakers	OFER ZALZBERG, Middle East Director, Herman C. Kelman Institute for Interactive Conflict Transformation; RABBANIT DR. TIRZA KELMAN, Ben Gurion University, Talpiot Teachers College



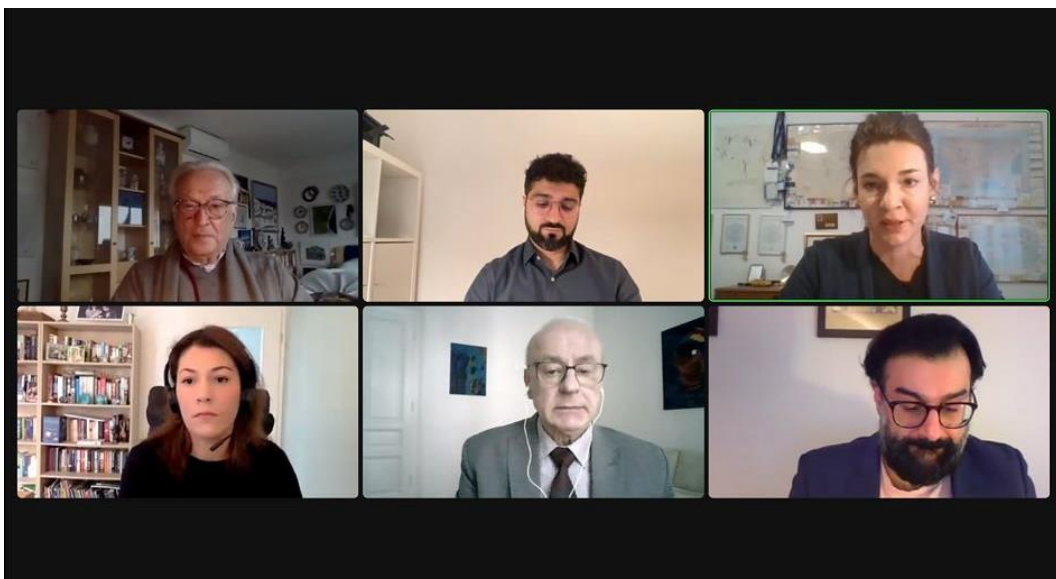


## What Would Be the Consequences of a Revolution in Iran?

Following the killing of Mahsa (Zhin) Amini in Iranian police custody, Iran is experiencing the largest protest movement for basic human rights since the founding of the Islamic Republic in 1979. Many experts see this movement as a revolutionary moment that could eventually lead to a change in the authoritarian political system. The ruling regime has oppressed society and deprived women of their basic rights, among them the right to choose their clothes. Politics has prioritised ideology over social needs and national interests. This has also translated into an isolated economy facing sanctions pressure, and a population suffering severe economic hardship.

Our panel discussion, jointly organised by the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (wiiw) and the International Institute for Peace (IIP), will address two main issues. First, we will discuss the background to the current momentous events, and consider how likely they are to lead to a change in political regime in Iran. Second, we will address the potential consequences of such a revolution at the centerpiece of the discussion.

Date	11 January 2023
Format	Online discussion
Moderator	STEPHANIE FENKART, Director of the IIP
Speakers	SARA BAZOUBANDI, Marie Curie Fellow at the Institute for Middle East Studies, German Institute for Global and Area Studies in Hamburg; ALI FATHOLLAH-NEJAD, German–Iranian political scientist focusing on Iran, the Middle East, and the post-unipolar world order; HEINZ GÄRTNER, Lecturer at the University of Vienna, Chair of the IIP Advisory Board; MAHDI GHODSI, Economist at the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (WIIW)



## Israel and Palestine – Is there a Chance for Peace?

Date	21 November 2023
Format	Blog Article
Author	Hannes Swoboda, President of the IIP, former MEP

After Hamas' brutal attack against Israel, which resulted in many dead and wounded civilians, the most important and urgent task of today is ending Hamas' rule of Gaza, where the terrorist organization holds the Palestinian population hostage. But the question that must be answered next – if not in parallel to the military action – is how to prevent the next war between Israel and either Hamas or whoever may succeed it. Significantly, this can only be achieved if the basic rights of all people living in Israel and Palestine are secure. This should be obvious to all observers, but unfortunately many simply defend Israel in its war against Hamas without considering how future aggression from Gaza can be avoided.

### **Years without progress towards peace**

Since the Oslo Accords in the 1990s, there has been no serious progress towards finding a peace settlement between Israel and the Palestinians. On the one side, the Israeli government, particularly under the leadership of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has only been managing the conflict – and, at that, poorly. Netanyahu generally preferred to speak with Hamas rather than the Palestinian Authority (PA). He used – and often misused – the PA as an instrument to advance Israel's security concerns and measures. This strange relationship between Israel and the PA undermined the PA's authority among its own population. Moreover, corruption within the PA leadership added to this mistrust, especially among Palestinian youth, for whom the chance to lead normal lives has grown ever smaller. Consequently, Hamas took control of Gaza and presented itself as the true defender of the Palestinian people. Neither the PA nor Israel wanted additional elections because they feared it would result in the rise of new radical groups.

It is high time to overcome this dangerous state of affairs. To bring an end to the vicious cycle of violence, we need a new government in Israel, a new and rejuvenated PA, and an end to the extremist rule of Hamas in Gaza. Stopping this endless series of wars in the Middle East is important first and foremost for its people, Arabs and Jews alike.

But it is also important for civil peace in Europe. In my contribution to a book published in 2014 by the Bruno Kreisky Forum titled *Rethinking the Politics of Israel and Palestine*, I wrote: “A new start is necessary and Europe should take the lead. Otherwise, the conflict in the Middle East will provoke rising conflicts inside our own countries, such as those seen during the last war in Gaza – where, alongside the peaceful and honest demonstrations protesting Israeli governments actions, we saw very nasty and unacceptable reactions against Jews... which is not only morally unacceptable but also a big disservice to the Palestinians.”

Examples of such “nasty and unacceptable reactions” could again be observed recently – even after the heinous actions of Hamas. Thus, for the sake of the citizens of Israel and Palestine but also in the interest of mutual respect between Jews and Muslims in Europe, we need stronger

European engagement in support of peace and security in the Middle East. Unfortunately, there is insufficient discussion or new ideas about how this aim can be reached among representatives of the European Union (EU). More often, ideas come from the side of the US, which remains active in proposing peace plans for the region. Without strong engagement by the American government, no progress is possible.

### **Different peace plans**

Over the past twenty years, the possibility of implementing the UN Partition Plan of 1947 and creating a viable Palestinian state – parallel to Israel – has become increasingly unrealistic. One could argue at length over which side has been more responsible for the failure to find a compromise, but certainly the ongoing land grab by Israeli settlers – tolerated or even supported by their government – has created a strong sentiment of despair and anger among Palestinians. Both the US and the EU have repeatedly criticized the creation of new settlements but have refrained from any kind of “sanctions” against Israel. Even today, Israeli settlers – with the support of the ruling right-wing government – continue with their activities, which are in clear violation of international law. These settlers actively seek the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes. The settlers and their supporters within Israel will serve as an enormous obstacle to any peace between Israel and the Palestinians. As long as right-wing religious forces remain in power in Israel, there is no chance for peace.

We cannot foresee how or when the present war will end, nor can we know to what degree Israel will seek to maintain control over Gaza or if this will be tolerated by the US, as Israel’s greatest supporter and supplier of arms. At the moment, we know that the US is working on alternative plans for both Gaza and Palestine as a whole.

In a recent analysis for the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Dennis Ross (the former special assistant to President Barack Obama for the Middle East), Robert Satloff, and David Makovsky presented a plan for how a new Palestine could be created while guaranteeing the security interests of Israel – which is certainly a better option than an extended occupation of Gaza. The goal of the three authors’ plan is, in the long term, to return Gaza to the control of the PA. But, in the short term, a Gaza Interim Administration should be established. Within this body, the civilian administration should be run by Palestinians, while public safety and law enforcement should be directed by a consortium of Arab states who have reached peace agreements with Israel. In addition, a new international agency should be established with the responsibility for the repair, reconstruction, and development of Gaza. The US should take the lead in promoting this plan, but, in order to strengthen its legitimacy, the mandate of the UN Security Council would be necessary.

Already in 2003, Martin Indyk (also a US Special Envoy for Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations) put forward a similar plan. He feared – correctly – that “Palestinian terror attacks and Israeli military responses are dragging both communities deeper and deeper into the abyss.” His plan assumed a freeze in the building of settlements and the structural reform of the PA. Parallel to these steps, the US would push for the creation of a trusteeship for Palestine: “A well-designed trusteeship for Palestine would have an explicit mandate to build an independent, democratic Palestinian state.” This plan would also be legitimized by the UN Security Council. Parallel to

the trusteeship, a sort of Marshall Plan would be created to rebuild the Palestinian economy.

As it concerns security, the plan proposed the establishment of special forces under the command of the US. The fact that these international forces would be under US command would reassure Israelis. Indyk did not foresee the inclusion of Arab troops, but “Egypt and Jordan should be encouraged to play an active role in training the restructured Palestinian security services.” However, as several other Arab states have since normalized diplomatic relations with Israel, these countries could be directly involved as security guarantors.

Another proposal was put forward by former Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad. His proposal begins by making it clear that any hope that the “PA, in its current configuration would return to exercising its purview over the Gaza Strip” is a non-starter. The PA and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) “suffered from an erosion of legitimacy brought on by the failure of the Oslo framework to deliver on its promise of a Palestinian state on the territory Israel captured in 1967 and has occupied since.” For Fayyad, it is important that all political factions in Palestine are included within the PLO. Only a PA that is based on an enlarged and inclusive PLO would be able to regain power in Gaza.

### **A long way towards an agreement**

All these plans and ideas leave out many important issues. First, would Israel – after many years of de facto opposition – be prepared to agree to a separate Palestinian state? Would Israel – regardless of the current government – be ready to agree to a compromise concerning settlements, perhaps in the framework of a land swap with Palestine? Could a stable majority be found in Israel who are prepared to deal with the domestic (and sometimes violent) conflicts with settlers and their ideological supporters?

What borders could possibly be accepted by Israel and Palestine? How could the mutually emotional question of Jerusalem be dealt with? How might a connection between the two separate territories of a future Palestinian state be organized? On this particular issue, I will always remember the moment when Shimon Peres, the leader of Israel’s Labor Party and later President of Israel, drew a road and rail bridge on a napkin in the restaurant of the European Parliament that would connect the two territories without Palestinian travelers touching Israeli territory. Is such a plan realistic?

Another open issue is the reaction of Israel’s neighbors. Who is ready to take responsibility for the future of Palestine? The plan outlined by Ross, Satloff, and Makovsky suggest including the countries that have normalized their relations with Israel. But what about Saudi Arabia? It has thus far hesitated to conclude an agreement along the line of the Abraham Accords. Moreover, the timing of Hamas’ attacks was likely chosen to prevent the conclusion of such an agreement. It would be very helpful if Saudi Arabia offered to play a role in mediating between the two sides. But is Saudi Arabia prepared to strengthen ties with Israel under the condition of its readiness to enter into constructive negotiations with the Palestinians?

Another vital question surrounds the attitude and actions of Iran. Iran remains the biggest spoiler to any negotiation because of its support for Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, and various

extremist groups in Iraq. In the last year, the two primary adversaries in the Muslim Middle East – Iran and Saudi Arabia – underwent a rapprochement under Chinese mediation. However, it is not yet clear how Hamas' attack or Israel's reaction have impacted that rapprochement. Has it undermined the new cooperation between the Saudis and the Iranians, or has it in fact strengthened it? Either way, Iran – especially with its stronger ties to an aggressive Russia – is always a risk factor in the region. Is a common strategy by the US, the EU, and Arab countries vis-a-vis Iran possible if Iran continues to play a destructive role? Or can Iran be convinced to refrain from supporting extremist groups across the region?

Furthermore, whatever the West intends to do, Russia and China will insist on playing a bigger role than in the past. Theoretically, a more nuanced approach to the conflict and the involvement of the UN Security Council could bring the big powers into a new dialogue. Irrespective of their enormous differences concerning Ukraine and Taiwan, the big powers – with the help of some countries of the Global South – could share responsibility for security in the Middle East. But perhaps this is an overly optimistic.

We should also not forget that Hamas' brutal attack, Israel's extended counterattack, and the continuing expansion of Israeli settlements expelling Palestinians from their homes has sowed anger and mistrust on both sides. The fact that Hamas' forces kidnapped and killed Israeli peace activists shows not only their cruelty but also their lack of care for human life. Rational thinking must emphasize the urgency of finding a path towards peace now. This would also be the best – if not the only – way to stop Gazans from voting for Hamas. Unfortunately, emotions in Israel and Palestine as well as around the world are not contributing to clear thinking. Emotions are never a good guide to compromise. Even if the US is pushing – hopefully together with the EU – for talks, negotiations, and eventually an agreement, some forces will refuse to give up and will attempt to boycott any compromise. Common international efforts could overcome these obstacles, but it would require enormous foresight and a willingness to address all these difficulties.

### **And the EU?**

Taking all these obstacles into account, there is no reason for responsible political forces to refrain from embarking on that long route towards peace. Hamas' brutal attack has painfully revealed the lack of a clear Middle East policy in the West, including in the EU. The EU's past policies have been characterized by repeated failed attempts. Torn between Israel's criticism for its alleged neglect of Palestinian terrorism on the one hand and the need to recognize the right of self-governance for the Palestinians on the other hand, the EU has often done too little too late. In addition, the US has not been ready to go beyond gently criticizing Israel and has vetoed even balanced resolutions by the Security Council. With this attitude, the US has also blocked the activities of the EU – in no small part because both Israel and the Palestinians sought US support for any peace talks. Even if expectations of the US were and still are different, the country is seen as the vital partner for any agreement. As a result, the EU has long acted in the shadow of the US.

Nevertheless, the EU should be not afraid to put forward its own ideas. Even if Israel continues to accuse the EU of being too supportive of the Palestinians, this should not deter the

development of an active Middle East policy. However, differences are also evident between EU members, as some countries' policies – such as that of Austria – are influenced by shame and guilt over crimes committed in the past rather than the need to support a peaceful Middle East. But the horrible crimes committed during the Nazi era – and before – cannot be undone by denying the Palestinians the right to self-determination. Only a policy of supporting the implementation of the UN Partition Plan of 1947 and creating a Palestinian state would help remedy crimes committed in our past.

Moreover, as elaborated in several contributions to the book by Bashir Bashir and Azar Dakwar, the creation of a Palestinian state would not preclude many forms of cooperation between Israel and Palestine and would not prevent all willing states in the region from building mutual respect as well as a comprehensive security mechanism. In this respect, the EU could contribute with its experience in developing a regional security system. That would be one big step forward.

### All Activities: Middle East

*(click on the activity for more details or use the QR code)*

November 21 | Israel and Palestine - Is there a Chance for Peace? 

November 14 | Mahnwache in Stille für Frieden in Israel und Palästina

October 20 | Offene Wunden - Blüten immer wieder ... 

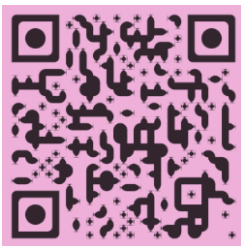
July 27 | Iran – Saudi Arabia Rapprochement: A Possible Precursor for Regional Cooperative Security 

May 11 | Israel's Domestic and International Challenges on its 75th Anniversary: Tectonic Shifts and Policy Dilemmas 

May 2 | Überlebt Erdogan, der große Jongleur die Wahlen? 

April 20 | Israel - 75 Jahre nach seiner Gründung 

February 17 | What would be the consequences of a revolution in Iran? 





## Africa

*Hannes Swoboda*

As an important but incredibly diverse region of the Global South, Africa is increasingly on the agenda of global debates. It is a continent of enormous potential but also of long-standing conflicts. The ongoing civil war in Ethiopia is just one such conflict. As a result of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, Ethiopia was only briefly a focus of international discussions and attempts to broker peace and understanding. However, the war has demonstrated the strong interrelationship of ethnic, political, and economic factors in the conflict. Moreover, it has been inseparable from ongoing instability in Ethiopia's wider neighborhood. The war has also made it clear how absurd and counterproductive it may be to award the Nobel Peace Prize to an acting politician. Today, Ethiopia is once again in the news because of its attempt to lease a harbor of its own in Somaliland, a breakaway state in Somalia.

Another country that often appears in international discussions is Rwanda. Under the leadership of President Kagame, Rwanda has become a model for how a society can overcome civil war and genocide based on ethnic divisions and prejudices. Since then, however, the enforcement of strict non-ethnic policies in Rwanda, with serious punishment for violations, has been used to establish an authoritarian regime. As a result, Kagame's aims of transforming Rwandan society and prioritizing the adoption of advanced technologies have been pursued through his modernizing yet authoritarian governance style. In addition, Kagame has maintained an interventionist policy in neighboring countries – especially the Democratic Republic of the Congo – with the pretext of fighting against enemies of Rwanda and its new ethnicity-neutral political system. Rwanda's post-war developments have thus been mixed.

Most recently, Rwanda has once again come into the spotlight with the attempts of some European countries – especially the UK – to “export” asylum-seekers to Rwanda in order to have their claims processed there. Discussion continues over whether Rwanda can be deemed a safe country for refugees and asylum-seekers. Aside from the particular Rwanda issue, Africa remains a region of particular concern as well as hope to better manage migration issues within the EU. The EU's new migration and asylum package can only be implemented if new forms of cooperation between EU and African countries can be established. This should not be in the form of sending asylum-seekers back to Africa – either to their home country or a third country. But it should be done in a close cooperation, including support for emigration and transit countries.

Africa is also an important partner for the EU in its common efforts to implement progressive climate policies. The countries of Africa have been disproportionately affected by climate change, despite their minimal contribution to historic emissions. The EU – with all the positive measures of its green deal – is still a major contributor. There is, however, significant potential for cooperation between Africa and the EU in fostering alternative energy supplies. One such example is the production of hydrogen from the sun and desalinated sea water. This could help support local development in Africa and also promote the export of hydrogen to the EU via existing and refurbished pipelines.

## Selected Projects

### Ethiopia's Bumpy Road to Peace and Lessons from the Western Balkans

Date	23 January 2023
Format	Blog Article
Author	Moges Teshome, Ph.D. student at the Vienna School of International Studies and former Project Assistant at the International Institute for Peace; Hannes Swoboda, President of the IIP, former MEP

Ethiopia's brutal civil war, which devastated the country for two years and claimed more than 600,000 civilian lives, came to an end on November 2, 2022 through an agreement on the "permanent cessation of hostilities" (CoH) signed in Pretoria, South Africa (complemented by the subsequent Nairobi Declarations on November 12, 2022). The agreement was achieved "after eight months of intense shuttle diplomacy," the breakdown of the humanitarian truce in August 2022, and ten days of negotiations in Pretoria behind closed doors. The international community has warmly welcomed the agreement and the progress of the CoH's implementation thus far. The UN Secretary-General hailed it as "a critical first step" to ending the war and bringing about a lasting peace in Ethiopia.

The major actors in the civil war include the Ethiopian Federal Government, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (and its military wing, the Tigray Defence Force), the Eritrean Defence Forces, and the Amhara Regional Force and Fano Militia, with all of them - to varying degrees - having a vested interest in the outcome of the war and the peace process. Nonetheless, they are not yet part of the peace process.

While no two conflicts are the same and the context within which a given conflict arises and evolves matters, a systematic analysis of the causes, nature, and dynamics of various conflicts and their management is possible. Thus, one can draw lessons from conflicts in other regions of the world for the Ethiopian peace process - particularly from the intractable conflicts in the Western Balkan. Moreover, one can seek to learn from conflicts that have become frozen or even resolved.

Accordingly, in this article, we would like to reflect on what made the CoH possible, what the agreement on the CoH is (not) about, and what the potential roadblocks to its full implementation are. In so doing, the article will draw on lessons learned from peace-making initiatives in the Western Balkans.

#### **How and Why Did the CoH Come into Effect?**

Many factors may explain why and how the CoH agreement came to fruition. These include the ever-shifting dynamics of the war, 'war fatigue' due to economic woes, growing public apathy to the war, and carefully-crafted diplomatic interventions. Given the nature of a war characterized by an extreme level of ethnic animosity, zero-sum thinking, the involvement of a foreign regime (Eritrea) hellbent on a war of vengeance against the TPLF, and unbridled informal militias – creative diplomatic tools were needed. Thus, without the conflict's ripeness, no amount of diplomatic pressure would have produced any effect - at least within the short term. A 'mutually hurting stalemate' seems to have paved the way for sustained shuttle diplomacy, which, in turn, streamlined trust-building initiatives.

The mediation process was undertaken under the auspices of the AU and further enhanced by actors such as the UN, IGAD, the US, South Africa, Kenya, the EU, and other friends of Ethiopia. Seemingly cognizant of the criticisms levelled against the AU's lukewarm approach to managing the conflict and the need to further enhance diplomatic efforts, the AU formed an official mediation team - constituted of Olusegun Obasanjo, the AU High Representative for the Horn of Africa (who led the shuttle diplomacy); Uhuru Kenyatta, the former president of Kenya; and Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, South Africa's former deputy president.

Throughout the mediation process, the mantra of "African solutions to African Problems" was invoked time and again. One may conclude that the AU has renewed its political agency, IGAD has once again realized that conflict resolution is one of its primary *raison d'être*, and the insider-partial mediation approach, when coupled with diplomatic intervention, is invaluable in managing conflict in the African context. The pivotal role played by Obasanjo - the Special Envoy - cannot be overstated. In an article for SEMAFOR, Obasanjo wrote: "Refusing to be discouraged, I continued with visits, consultations, and discussions to get face to start talks between the Federal Government of Ethiopia and the leadership of Tigray people." It remains to be seen whether the AU will continue to serve as an important security actor. However, in brokering the CoH in Ethiopia, it played a considerable role.

In addition, the fact that the final stage of the CoH agreement was undertaken under relative secrecy and behind closed doors - sealed off from the media - is reminiscent of the Oslo process. It was an ingenious and diplomatically creative decision to do so given the fact that the political atmosphere was extremely polarised, diaspora communities were under significant pressure, and spoilers were waiting at the gates. Thus, a diverse set of factors contributed to the success of the mediation process.

### **What the CoH Agreement is (Not) About**

The peace agreement, in a nutshell, is a restoration of the political *status quo ante*. This entails, in practical terms, the restoration of the constitutional order so that both parties will exercise their respective powers according to the stipulations of the constitution; the mutual recognition of both parties as legitimate political actors; the resolution of contested territories through procedures set out in the constitution; the settlement of political difference through political dialogue; and the holding of regional elections in Tigray, owing to the nullity of the election held in September 2020 and, by extension, the facilitating of Tigray's representation in the government structure.

For the full restoration of the *status quo ante* to take hold, various facilitatory matters are included in the agreement. These include: the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of Tigrayan forces; confidence-building measures, such as the provision of immediate humanitarian aid and the restoration of basic services; the cessation of hostile propaganda; the delisting of the TPLF as a terrorist organization; and a joint communication between the highest military commanders from both sides.

However, one should not get carried away by the silencing of the guns as if it will address any of the long-standing issues that have been dogging the Ethiopia's socio-political fabric. Crucially, the peace agreement does not deal with all the issues and parties to the conflict - much less does it deal with the structural causes of the war. Moreover, the agreement is extremely lopsided when it comes to striking a balance between peace and justice in that it appears to be undergirded by the desire for "peace at any cost." It is no wonder that there are no separate provisions dedicated to accountability mechanisms in the CoH, apart from a passing

remark envisaged under Art. 10(3) of the agreement. It partly reads: “The Government of Ethiopia shall implement a comprehensive national transitional justice policy aimed at accountability, ascertaining the truth, redress for victims, reconciliation, and healing, consistent with the Constitution of FDRE and the African Union Transitional Justice Policy Framework.” Consequently, all issues concerning accountability mechanisms are left to national mechanisms. To this end, the government recently released a Transitional Justice Policy that received little public attention - partly because it was not widely disseminated and perhaps because the government never genuinely wanted to solicit feedback from relevant stakeholders. Nevertheless, as recent experience shows, it is hard to envision accountability in the absence of strong institutions, fundamental political reforms, or, more importantly, effective public participation.

To be fair, it seems that most of the structural issues - social, political, and institutional - are to be dealt with in a separate process: the National Dialogue Commission, which was established one year ago. However, if the experience of the defunct Truth and Reconciliation Commission provides any guidance and the procedure through which the National Dialogue Commission came into being is at all similar, it is safe to say that there is a tradition of *instrumentalizing* transitional justice mechanisms by the incumbent government. Indeed, the establishment of the Commission has already been received with mixed feelings.

While some observers - mostly pro-government groups - are optimistic about the prospect of the Commission achieving its intended goals, others seriously question its legitimacy - to the extent of calling it “dead on arrival.” It may not be dead yet, but it is deeply flawed, and the government will likely use this to buy time and ultimately consolidate its power unless the process is reinvigorated. At the very least, it ought to be inclusive and owned by everyone. After all, it is a national dialogue, as indicated by the name - a dialogue among all concerned stakeholders, a staged performance.

### **A Flawed Peace Process is a Postponed Crisis**

As Clayton and Sticher point out, whether a ceasefire is durable or not largely depends on the design of the agreement. Their findings suggest that “a ceasefire with a verification and monitoring mechanism appears to have been more effective than a less comprehensive ceasefire in containing deadly violence.” Provided that conditions are favorable, it follows that the CoH is promising precisely because it has a loose inbuilt *verification, monitoring, and compliance* mechanism, as provided under Art. 11 of the agreement and further bolstered by the Nairobi Declaration. The implementation of the DDR process - especially the disarmament of heavy weapons - has commenced, as the recent visit by a team of monitoring, verification, and compliance to Mekelle indicates. Furthermore, Advisor to the President of Tigray Regional State Getachew Reda announced on Twitter: “Tigray has handed over its heavy weapons as part of the implementation of the peace agreement.” However, the Achilles heel of the CoH lies, *inter alia*, in its exclusion of relevant stakeholders and/or spoilers; the foreclosure of space for the international community in serving as guarantors of the peace process; the complete disregard for public perception about the implementation process; inadequate accountability mechanisms; and the postponing of the issue of contested territories by using ‘constructive ambiguity’ as a diplomatic tool of expediency.

According to the findings of Stephen Stedman, Donald Rothchild, and Elizabeth Cousens, the success of the implementation of peace agreements - especially those brokered by international actors - depends on two factors: the difficulty of the implementation environment and the willingness of the international community to provide the necessary resources and commitment

to a long-term peace-making project. Among the difficulties surrounding the implementation process, spoilers and hostile neighbours must also be seriously considered. In this regard, spoilers have never been in short supply in the Horn of Africa. More specifically, the Eritrean regime and Amhara forces are both stakeholders and spoilers given that they participated in the civil war directly and actively. Despite this, the peace agreement has excluded both parties. At a bare minimum, procedural fairness would have required extensive consultations on security guarantees and future political arrangements.

Although the peace process must be owned nationally and implemented within the regional framework, the loose monitoring, verification, and compliance mechanism put in place by the AU could and should have been further bolstered by clearly outlining the roles of relevant entities. Above all, the DDR process requires financial resources, technical expertise, and a coordinated approach. Significantly, Ethiopia lacks nearly all three and must therefore rely on international assistance. For this reason, the direct and formal involvement of the UN would help alleviate strains and ensure the steady implementation of the CoH.

Public perceptions regarding the peace process also matter, but they have not been given sufficient consideration in the Ethiopian context. The war was primarily over a political difference between two political parties (the ruling Prosperity Party and the TPLF). Meanwhile, ordinary citizens - those most affected by the war – have waited desperately for an end to the humanitarian blockade and the restoration of normalcy. As such, any public perception data - particularly on social media - should be taken with a pinch of salt.

That said, as per a recent opinion poll conducted by the author on Facebook and Twitter concerning the efficacy of the peace process, the vast majority of participants (63.3%) dubbed the peace process “fundamentally flawed from the outset.” 29.1% voiced their concern that it “suffers from some irregularities, but remains hopeful,” and a minority (7.58%) indicated the process was “flawless and on the right path.”

Thus, substantial consultations with all relevant stakeholders and a bottom-up approach to the implementation of the peace process will prove critical to its success.

In the same vein, the adage that “there is no lasting peace without justice” is not just fanciful language. In this regard, a comprehensive empirical study conducted by Daniel Druckman and Lynn Wagner shows that the effective management of internal conflicts and ending cycles of violence requires broad-based justice. It is a widely accepted fact that to ensure accountability there must be a peaceful environment. But this does not mean that justice must be traded for peace. Rather, by using proper sequencing strategies, striking a delicate balance between the demand for an expedient peace and robust justice is possible.

The issue of contested territories between the Tigray and Amhara regional states – the elephant in the room – should not be taken lightly. Because this issue has existed long before the onset of the civil war and served as fuel during the fighting, it fundamentally affects the future relationship between the two peoples and will remain a source of intractable conflict unless and until it is resolved. Strategies such as special protections within the existing constitutional order or granting autonomous self-administration might be possible. But what will ultimately decide the fate of the contested territories and related issues therein will be the will of the people - not a temporary political dispensation. To this end, the next steps will entail sustained dialogue, trust-rebuilding measures, the reintegration of displaced people, reconciliation, and informed referenda.



On top of the aforementioned issues, the situation in the Oromia region and beyond remains precarious. The civil war in Oromia - one of the conflicts that has the potential to destabilize Ethiopia - has been wilfully neglected. Milkessa Gemechu has dubbed the situation in Oromia as the hidden reign of terror in order to signify the magnitude of the problem and its potential repercussions. Jawar Mohammed, a prominent political figure, remarked: “As long as the war continues in Oromia, Benishangul Gumuz, and other regions, the Tigray agreement will either fall apart or become just another war alliance.” Thus, a comprehensive peace plan is the only tenable way out of the multifaceted conflicts unfolding across Ethiopia.

### **The Western Balkans: An Example for Conflict Resolution?**

One must carefully consider the specific circumstances of any conflict before drawing general conclusions. There are, of course, conflicts in which it is possible to neatly define the two sides and concentrate efforts to resolve the conflict by applying pressure to the two sides. However, this is rarely the case; conflicts are generally far more complicated and protracted. As in the case of Ethiopia, the wars of Yugoslav succession had numerous participants and interests – both internal and external.

### **The Complexity of Conflict Management in the Western Balkans**

The wars of Yugoslav succession were started by parties that sought to break up Yugoslavia and deliberately opposed all efforts to reform and restructure the multi-ethnic, multi-faith state. Each party to the conflict also received varying degrees of support by external actors with an interest in the conflict. The EU had no unified opinion on the outcome of the conflict; some member states supported the dissolution of Yugoslavia, while others wanted to maintain the country’s unity in a reformed, more democratic federation. Russia clearly supported Serb interests, while Turkey and other Muslim countries in the Middle East supported the interests of Muslims/Bosniaks. The US had no clear favourite, but it was interested in serving as a peacemaker and was eager to prevent a change of the political orientation of the region in the direction of Moscow.

Similar to the foundations and origins of a conflict, the solutions to a conflict can also be rather complicated. However, for many observers and actors involved in the resolution of the wars of Yugoslav succession, it became clear that future conflicts will be increasingly similar to those in the Western Balkans. Javier Solana, the EU High Representative at the time, concluded: “the massive, complex, protracted, multi-national, multi-faceted and ultimately regionally owned peace effort in Bosnia-Herzegovina is a model for what crisis and conflict management is likely to look like in the twenty-first century.”

In the end, the West had a clear interest in stopping the wars and seeking an agreement to resolve the status of the newly independent states. Russia, meanwhile, had no clear vision for the future but generally sought to support Serb interests across the region. One incentive for the newly independent countries as well as Albania was the potential for EU accession - a “European perspective.” The countries thereafter became “potential candidates” for EU membership.

However, it must be added that the “peace agreements” were far from perfect. The Dayton Agreement set out a complicated constitutional arrangement for Bosnia and Herzegovina composed of two entities: the majority Serb Republika Srpska and the majority Bosniak and Croat Federation. UN Security Council resolution 1244 left the status of Kosovo unresolved and did not deal with the question of independence. Once again, internal conflicts over the

rights and obligations of the different entities and communities brought insecurity to the region – which continues to this very day. Russia in particular has sought to exacerbate these differences and conflicts by continuously supporting Serb interests. Meanwhile, local leaders utilize foreign support to spoil efforts for reconciliation and integration. At the same time, the influence of the West has grown weaker due to the decreasing attractiveness of EU membership. The EU has not sufficiently considered how to integrate the countries of the Western Balkans even before they fulfil the conditions for full membership, and the countries themselves are not implementing these conditions when they contradict their immediate political and economic interests.

### **The Role of the International Community in Peace-Making**

The ongoing external influence of the EU and the US remains a major factor in preventing frozen conflicts in the Western Balkans from heating up. This influence is supported by economic aid and partly by the opening of markets for goods from the region. The liberalization of visa regimes and participation in some EU programs are additional elements underlining the EU's protection and supervision of the region. Nevertheless, Russia, China, and Turkey constantly intervene to counter Western policies across the region. Needless to say, the West does not have complete control of domestic and foreign policy in the region. There is thus a permanent struggle to convince governments - with help from civil society inside the countries - to keep mutual understanding and peace alive.

It should be noted that, in any conflict where there is no clear winner and loser, there must be sufficient incentive to find a compromise and ensure its implementation. External incentives must be combined with pressure and sanctions when needed. In the case of the Western Balkans, this is “relatively” easy as these countries are not yet members of the EU but still hope to join someday - even with decreasing public support. When countries are members of the EU – or, in the case of Ethiopia and Eritrea, the AU - pressure and sanctions are much more difficult to impose or implement. Nevertheless, the EU recognized that a union without sanctions possibilities is a weak union. Thus, the EU created mechanisms for how to impose sanctions on its members. One must admit that these possibilities for sanctions are still relatively weak. While the AU is not yet as cohesive of a unit as the EU, the implementation of ceasefires and peacekeeping affords strong possibilities from external or superior authorities.

One such authority is the UN. However, the authority of the UN has been weakened - by many vetoes in the Security Council and by violations by permanent members themselves. Therefore, regional organizations must increasingly take over responsibilities previously filled by the UN. As difficult as it may be, the AU must add relevant organizational capacities and its leaders must be courageous enough to speak out against leaders or groups who grossly violate its principles. This may affect any party to a conflict. A stronger and more self-confident AU would also be able to cooperate with the UN and the EU as outside partners in helping to solve conflicts and implement peace agreements. Clearly, in the case of the Western Balkans, one can observe the robust cooperation between leading Western actors and the UN.

### **In Search of a Just Peace**

For a sustainable peace to hold, a just peace - not just any peace - is a precondition. The notion of a just peace is predicated on *four pillars*: thin recognition of others as autonomous beings; thick recognition of identities; compromises from all parties to the conflict; and rules of the game clearly stipulating the procedures for future engagement and defining the rights and duties of the respective parties.

The most important but simultaneously most complicated element in finding and implementing peace is seeking justice as a basis for reconciliation, as many questions cannot be answered easily. Who is responsible for war crimes? The political and/or military commanders? The acting troops and/or individual combatants? What was justified defence, and what was unnecessary aggression? What is important is not so much to seek justice as a result but instead justice as a process of finding perpetrators. And it is especially important for citizens who suffered as a result of these crimes.

As Carla Del Ponte, the Prosecutor at the UN International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), remarked: “Politicians, historians, and those in a position to argue will likely endlessly discuss the nature of the conflict. For many, political and historical definitions will always be more important than the human dimensions, human suffering, and individual responsibility. By contrast, criminal prosecution targets exactly the human dimension of each criminal offense - the perpetrators and the victims.” But one must also accept that the judicial record does not always “outweigh alternative individual or group understandings or interpretations of the past.”

The ICTY as well as national courts played an important role in trying to seek justice, but they could not prevent interpretations that denied obvious facts. One extreme example is the genocide at Srebrenica. There will always be parties who refuse to accept well-documented facts, even after a court decision based on testimony and scientific proof.

As a result, any resolution after such complicated conflicts may be incomplete. With the careful attention and involvement of international actors, local and regional participants to the conflict can become active participants in conflict resolution. However, as mentioned before, protracted conflicts will need protracted conflict resolution plans. The question is therefore whether all actors will be patient enough to wait for results and work even with small successes in the meantime. It is not yet definitively clear how things will develop in the Western Balkans, but it remains important that the international community stays vigilant and ready to apply strong pressure on any party that threatens a return to violence. For the Western Balkans, this seems to be the case. Let us hope this will be also the case for Ethiopia.

## **Concluding Remarks**

After enduring a decades-long cycle of violence, a pervasive culture of impunity, and the most horrific civil war in modern history, Ethiopia is currently at a crossroads. Regrettably, it has squandered all previous opportunities to come to terms with its past and chart a better future. Now is a time to decide the fate of the country: to end the pervasive culture of impunity, to part ways with the long tradition of violence, and to entrench a political system based on the rule of law.

Towards this end, there must be a comprehensive peace plan that is underpinned by justice, a lasting commitment, lessons learned from other regions, and effective cooperation from the international community. As Adam Roberts succinctly put it: “preventing future war is not simply a matter of establishing a system of order in which uses of force are effectively restricted: any system of order needs also to incorporate a strong element of justice.” In Ethiopia, this goes without saying.

A comprehensive peace plan must also reflect the complex situation on the ground – diverse issues, multiple parties, and a magnitude of crises – and focus specifically on ending the cycle

of violence once and for all. Otherwise, a flawed peace plan will only become a postponed crisis.

Conflict management experience from other regions of the world, including the Western Balkans, shows that, first and foremost, solutions to protracted and complex conflicts call for local solutions that coordinate approaches and ensure long-term commitments from all actors, including the international community.

Finally, maximum pressure must be exerted by all concerned citizens and the international community to rein in the tendency of the regime to instrumentalize the peace process.

## All Activities: Africa

*(click on the activity for more details or use the QR code)*

May 19 | Rwanda: From Tragic Past to Innovative Future 

January 26 | Afrika-EU Energiepartnerschaft im Wandel 

January 23 | Ethiopia's Bumpy Road to Peace and Lessons from the Western Balkans 



## Podcast ‘Peace Matters’

In 2023 IIP and Ponto – Vienna-based grassroots think tanks – jointly launched a new podcast show – ‘Peace Matters’.

‘Peace Matters’ is a podcast on contemporary geopolitics and international relations. Focusing on current developments around the world, it offers in-depth analysis from leading experts in Europe and beyond. Since this is a truly global but also Austrian podcast, some episodes are released in English, others in German.





## Podcast ‘Peace Matters’: Episodes in 2023

*(click on the title for more details or use the QR code below)*

E13\_South Caucasus Series\_3. Georgia at a Crossroads: Looking East or West?

E12\_South Caucasus Series\_2. Turkey and Russia as Regional Powers

E11\_South Caucasus Series\_1. Is Peace Possible between Armenia and Azerbaijan?

E10\_Neutralität in einer neuen geopolitischen Realität

E9\_Quo Vadis, Belarus?

E8\_Space Race: Sicherheitspolitische Implikationen des Weltraums

E7\_Radicalization/Nationalism/Genocide - A Threat to Europe?

E6\_Nuclear Weapons in Belarus and Mutiny in Russia - Insecurity for Europe?

E5\_Frau Macht Frieden

E4\_Elections in Turkey - A New Approach to Domestic and Foreign Policy?

E3\_Kosovo und Serbien - Ist ein stabiler Frieden möglich?

E2\_Nuklearwaffen im Fokus: Zwischen Atomwaffensperr- sowie Atomwaffenverbotsvertrag und neuer Aufrüstung

E1\_One year of war in Ukraine: Does peace still matter?



## Der Standard Blog: Gesellschaft - Macht – Frieden

The IIP in cooperation with Sir Peter Ustinov Institute and Think- and Do-Tank Shabka, run an online blog section at one of Austria's largest daily newspapers – Der Standard.

Gesellschaftliche- und Machtverhältnisse schaffen Frieden – wenn sie von Gerechtigkeit geprägt sind. Herrschen Vorurteile und Hass ist es nicht weit bis zu Gewalt und Krieg. Das Sir Peter Ustinov Institut widmet sich der Erforschung und Bekämpfung von Vorurteilen als Grundvoraussetzung für ein friedliches Zusammenleben. Der Förderung eines globalen Friedens hat sich das International Institute for Peace verschrieben und Shabka als strategischer Think & Do Tank versteht sich als zivilgesellschaftliche außen- und sicherheitspolitische Plattform. Zusammen sind wir Teil einer starken Zivilgesellschaft, für die das Streben nach Gerechtigkeit die Voraussetzung für nationalen-, europäischen- und globalen Frieden ist.

Die einzelnen Beiträge spiegeln die Meinungen der AutorInnen wider und nicht zwangsläufig die der Institute.

### All Blogs at *Der Standard*

*(click on the activity for more details or use the QR code below)*

14. November | Wie Humanismus und Pragmatismus die Migrationsdebatte verändern können

20. Oktober | Israel und Palästina: Offene Wunden bluten immer wieder

26. September | Wie Österreich einen Kompromiss in Bergkarabach vorantreiben könnte

31. Juli | Über die Notwendigkeit einer gezielten Migrationsstrategie

15. Juni | Die FPÖ und der ewige Faschismus

19. April | Hat die Neutralität eine Zukunft?

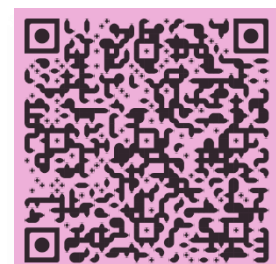
13. März | Engagierte Neutralität – glaubwürdig und nützlich

3. März | Wie auf nichtwestliche Positionen zum Ukrainekrieg eingehen?

24. Februar | Ein Jahr Krieg gegen die Ukraine: Der weit entfernte Frieden

13. Februar | Gefährdete Demokratien: Resilienz und Solidarität als Gegenmittel

27. Jänner | Energiewende: Europa und Afrika können mehr





## Partners and Networks



### Neutrality Studies



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