

Understanding the Foreign Policy Behavior of the Balkans from a Small States perspective



Understanding the Foreign Policy Behavior of the Balkans from a Small States perspective

Academic Workshop

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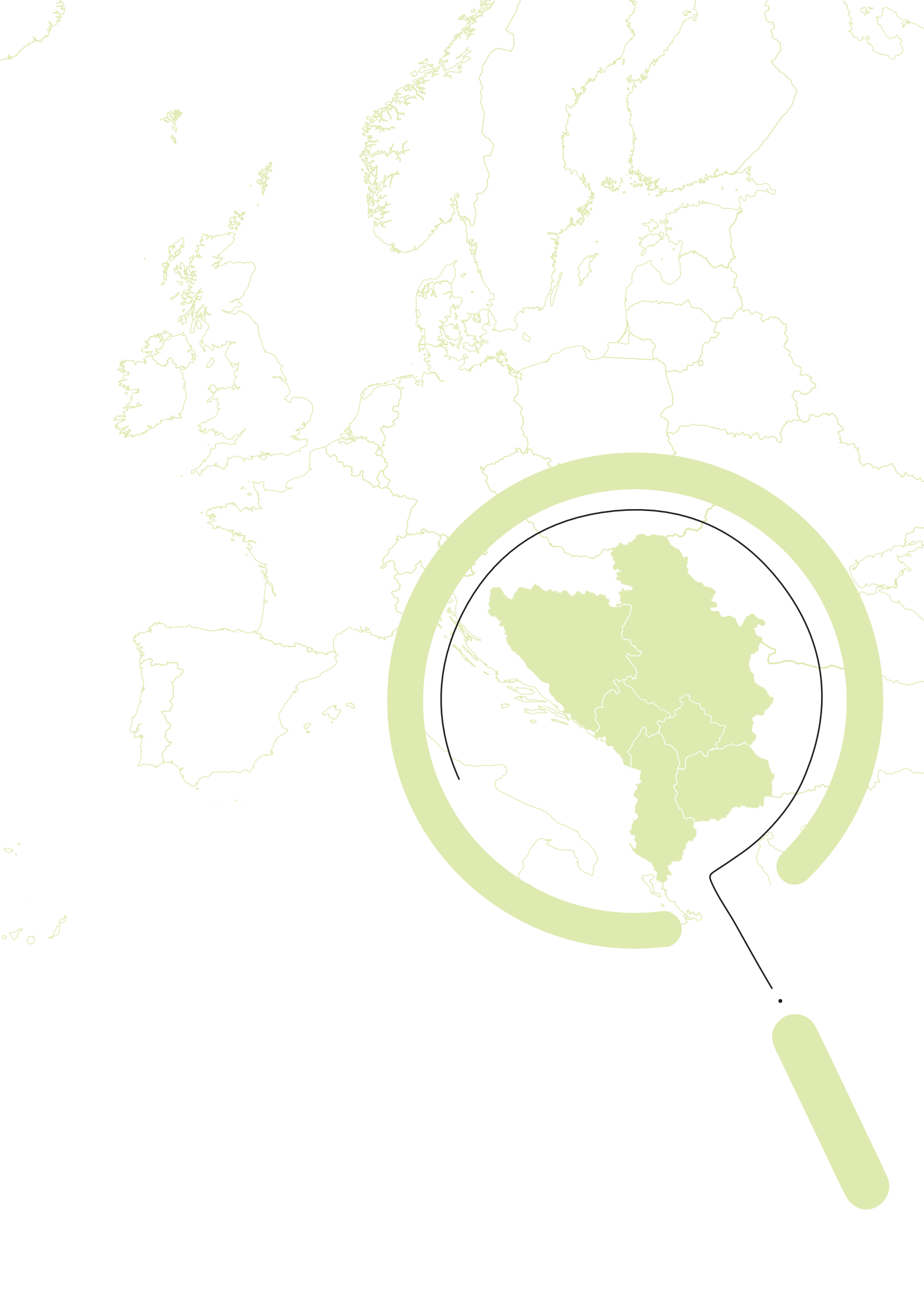
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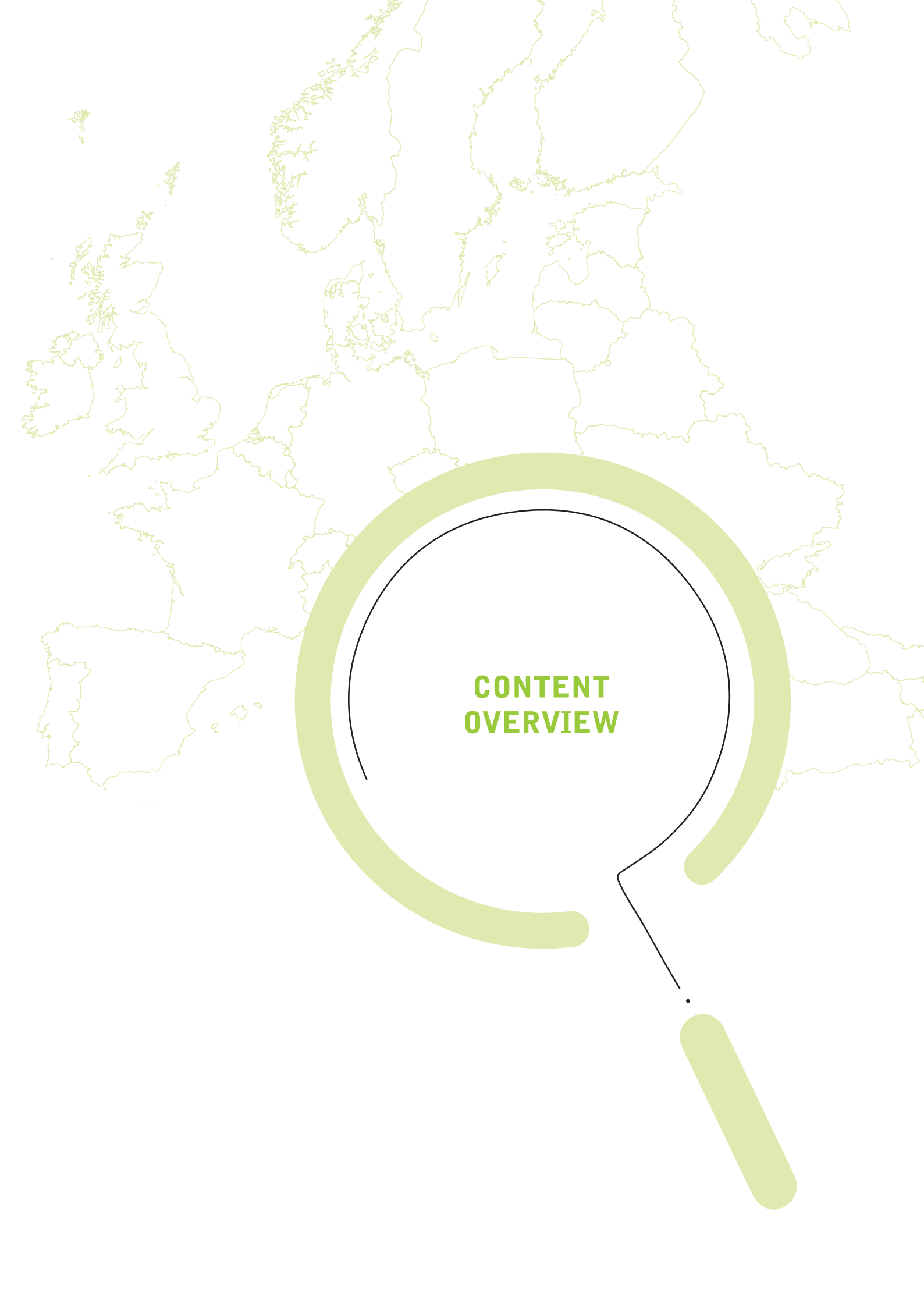
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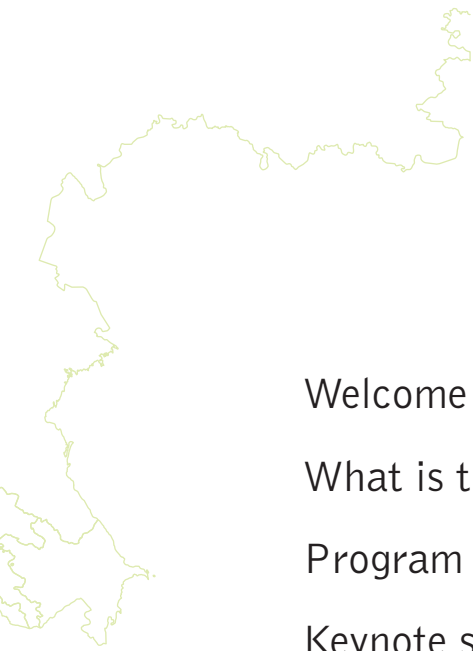
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DR. GÖKHAN TUNCER

*Director,
Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Tirana*

Welcome Note

Dear participants of the 1st Academic Workshop “Understanding the Foreign Policy Behavior of the Balkans from a Small States perspective” here in the premises of the newly established Tirana office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation.

It is a very special pleasure for me to welcome you in Tirana in an extraordinary context where we see the Western Balkans are declared as a key priority for the European Union. We have opened our office in Tirana – our fourth office in the Balkans – one year ago based on our strong commitment to the European idea and to the integration of the Western Balkans in European structures. We are pleased about the current momentum of EU-Western Balkans relations. However, we are also well aware about the risks involved. The topic of small states has become a thought-provoking subject within international relations, yet research on the Balkan states’ foreign policy making from a small state perspective remains few. In the context of stronger engagement of the EU to accelerate the integration process of the region, a comprehensive study of Western Balkans’ foreign policies from a small state perspective can present new and timely insights. I am delighted that we have now come together in Tirana to discuss how the small states approach can contribute to the understanding and explaining the foreign policy making of Balkan states.

Let us discuss together how we can face the challenges involved in the integration of the Western Balkan states and bring sustainable peace and development to our continent. With this workshop we want to foster academic exchange and research cooperation on the European level to develop the analytical tools, which are necessary to better shape dialogue and integration within the region itself as well as on the European level. Support this idea with your knowledge, network and commitment. I would be pleased if this academic workshop could be the starting point for further discussions and meetings on this topic - gladly again in Tirana.



PROF. DR. ÖZLEM TÜR

*Professor of International Relations,
METU, Turkey*

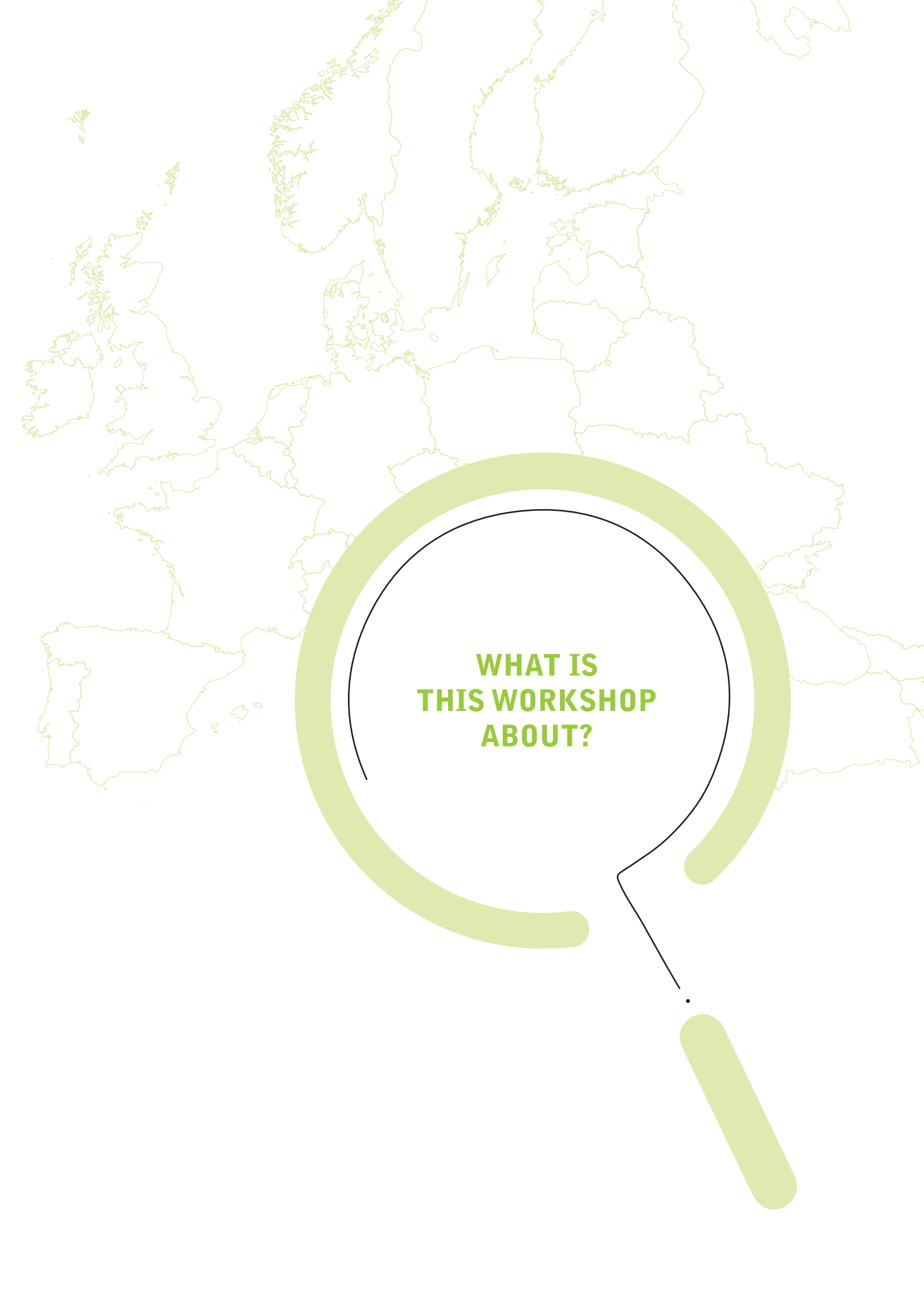
Welcome Note

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to this workshop on the foreign policies of small states, organized by the Heinrich Böll Foundation, Tirana. Discussing this topic in Tirana, the capital of a “small state” surrounded by other small states, is especially exciting. As is often underlined, the study of international relations has traditionally prioritized great powers/ hegemons/ dominant states while neglecting the small ones. Although many studies are thriving on the foreign policies of small states, very few bring in case studies from the Western Balkans. This event aims to contribute to the general discussion on the foreign policies of small states with individual case studies from the Western Balkans. Conceptualizing the foreign policies of Western Balkan countries from a small-state perspective can give us insights into understanding the major regional developments, opportunities and challenges the countries face. Systemic constraints, regional ambitions, drivers of conflict and cooperation in the region can be discussed also in comparison to other regions of similar composition – mostly small states with a higher and greater power interest.

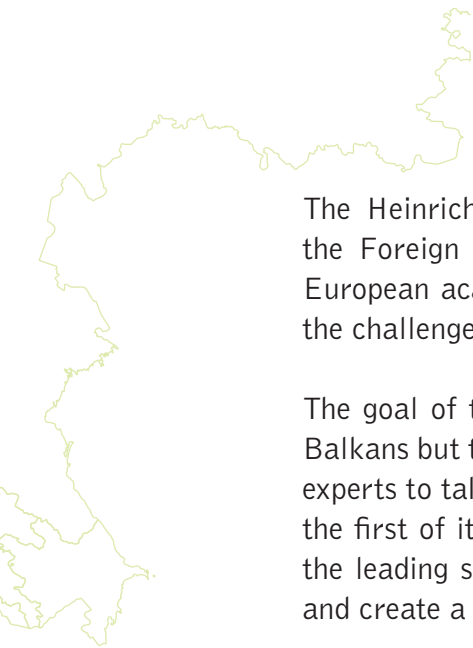
I am excited about this Workshop not only because of the interesting topic of discussion but also because of our guests. We will have with us leading names in the field of foreign policies of small states and the Western Balkans.

I hope this endeavor will lead to many more questions in the future and offer much food for thought.





**WHAT IS
THIS WORKSHOP
ABOUT?**



The Heinrich Böll Foundation, Tirana office, is pleased to present "Understanding the Foreign Policy Behavior of the Balkans from a Small States Perspective", a European academic workshop that will initiate a comprehensive discussion regarding the challenges and development opportunities in the Western Balkan small states.

The goal of this workshop is not to superficially address the political tensions in the Balkans but to create an intellectually stimulating space and encourage academics and experts to take a deeper look at the foreign policy dynamics of small states. This event, the first of its kind organised by our office, is designed to support networking among the leading scholars of small states research across Europe and Albanian researchers and create a framework for future and research cooperations on the European level.

During this workshop, there will be two main thematic focuses, namely the Small States and their Foreign Policy, and then the focus will shift towards the individual cases from the Western Balkan states. All invited guests at this event are academics and researchers whose projects and fields of expertise relate to the small state foreign policy topic and the European Union / Western Balkan politics.

We believe in the power of research to help build more informed and democratic societies which is why we hope the recommendations proposed and discussed at this event will reach some of the key actors in the Albanian and Western Balkans political sphere.



PROGRAM AGENDA

DAY 1

09:00 - 09:30 **Registration, Welcome and Exchange**
09:30 - 09:45 **Opening Remarks:** Dr. Gökhan Tuncer and Prof. Özlem Tür

1st Session **Debating the Small States and Small State Foreign Policy Behavior**
09:45 - 10:30 Prof. Baldur Thorhallsson - "Shelter-seeking behaviour of small states in the international system"
10:30 - 11:15 Prof. Özlem Tür - "Small states in the international system: insights from power transition theory"

11:15 - 11:45 **Coffee Break**

2nd Session **Debating the International Relations of Balkan states: Issues of Cooperation and Conflict, Continuity and Change**
11:45 - 12:30 Prof. Revecca Pedi - "Small state security strategies in the multiplex order: a view from the Balkans"
12:30 - 13:15 Prof. Marko Kovacevic - "Assessing the viability of small state strategies in the context of the war in Ukraine: a view from the Western Balkans"

13:15 - 14:30 **Lunch/ Networking**

3rd Session **A deeper look into the Western Balkans**
14:30 - 15:15 Dr. Ana Bojinovic Fenko - "Regional practice of the anarchical culture in the Western Balkans: states' role as enemy, rival, or friend"
15:15 - 16:00 Mr. Naim Rashiti - "Western Balkans: The conglomerate of small states that needs a joint ambition to prevail"

16:30 - 18:30 **Cultural activity** (optional for guest speakers only)
18:30 - 20:00 **Reception**

DAY 2

Registration 09:00 - 09:30

Prof. Stefano Bianchini - 09:30 - 10:15
"Between sovereignty wishes, and dependency.
The endless challenges of small Balkans states
in foreign policy"

Short Break 10:15 - 10:30

Foreign Policies of Western Balkan States – 4th Session Case Studies

Prof. Dilaver Arıkan Açar - 10:30 - 11:15
"Albania: A pragmatic small state playing on
asymmetric relations in the international arena"
Mr. Adri Nurellari - 11:15 - 12:00
"A small state with a big problem:
Kosovo's foreign policy deadlocked
in between peacemakers and spoilers"

Lunch/ Networking 12:00 - 13:30

Prof. Lejla Ramic Mesihovic - 13:30 - 14:15
"Key challenges of foreign policy
of Bosnia and Herzegovina"

Interactive Plenary Discussion: 14:15 - 15:15

Patterns of Alliances and Conflict
in the Western Balkans

Closing Remarks: 15:15 - 15:30

Dr. Gökhan Tuncer and Prof. Özlem Tür



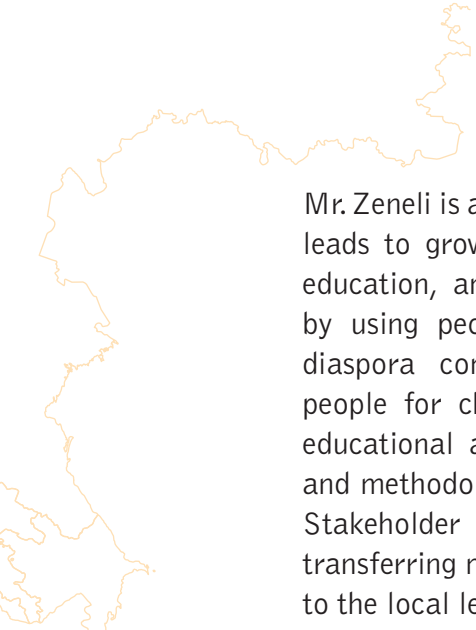


KEYNOTE
SPEAKERS



BERNARD ZENELI

*Migration and Education Expert/
Policy Advisor*



Mr. Zeneli is a specialist in development work that leads to growth and advances policy processes, education, and creativity in Southeast Europe by using people skills, engaging migrants and diaspora communities, and mobilizing young people for change. He is currently engaged in educational assessments and training processes and methodologies. Bernard is developing Multi-Stakeholder Dialogues around the issue of transferring migration and diaspora management to the local level of governing in cooperation with GIZ and GFA in Albania. With local NGOs in Albania and Kosovo, he is developing new ways of teaching and learning in hybrid environments, including leadership training for local government in Kosovo and training of women seeking to run for political offices in national and local elections. Bernard is a Fulbright Scholar, in Political Science and Policy Analysis at Northeastern University in Boston. He holds a bachelor's degree in Teaching English as a Second Language from the Foreign Languages Faculty of the University of Tirana and a Master of Arts in Political Science from Northeastern University.

MODERATOR





BALDUR THORHALLSSON

*Founder and Research Director,
Centre for Small State Studies,
University of Iceland*

Baldur Thorhallsson is a Professor of Political Sciences, and founder and Research Director for the Centre for Small State Studies, at the University of Iceland. His research focus has primarily been on small states, small state theory, European integration, the foreign policies of the Nordic states. His recent articles are included in The Hague Journal of Diplomacy, Scandinavian Journal of History and Global Affairs.

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Shelter-seeking behaviour of small states in the international system

A presentation about a new small-state theory on the behavior of small states in the international system. Shelter theory is an attempt to bring together a number of important insights from other theories and research, which we have found inadequate on their own. We basically claim that traditional IR theories fail to grasp the broad domestic incentives behind small states' alignment with larger states. Small states seek shelter provided by larger states and international organizations for domestic reasons as much as for international ones. Hence, small states seek political, economic and societal shelter provided by larger states and international organizations.



ÖZLEM TÜR

Professor,
International Relations,
METU, Turkey

Small states in the international system: insights from power transition theory

My paper aims to analyze the impact of the international system on the foreign policies of small states. While small states are often considered to have not much choice but to bandwagon with the great powers, this paper will try to understand how the systemic dynamics affect their behaviour. By taking Lemke's multiple hierarchy model, based on power transition theory, it will try to bring the concepts of satisfaction/dissatisfaction and parity/preponderance into the discussion of small states' relations with the dominant power and other regional small states. It will try to show when small states choose to cooperate (when they are satisfied and faced with preponderance) and when they can be expected to decide to be in conflict and possibly go to war (when they are dissatisfied and in parity). The paper will try to show the impact of institutions and alliances on small states, and discuss the cases that do not fit, are dissatisfied but weak and are still in defiance of the dominant powers.

Dr. Özlem Tür is a Professor of International Relations at Middle East Technical University in Ankara, Turkey. Her expertise includes Turkish foreign policy, politics of the Middle East (especially Syria, Israel and Lebanon), feminist IR theory and foreign policy of the small states. Her publications include "Small States" in International Relations: Development, Definition, Foreign Policy and Alliance Behavior (with Nuri Salık), Uluslararası İlişkiler, 2017, Turkey-Syria Relations - Between Enmity and Amity (London: Ashgate, 2013, co-edited with Raymond Hinnebusch); "Turkey and Israel in the 2000s" (Israel Studies, 2012); "Political Economy of Turkey's Relations with the Middle East" (Turkish Studies, 2011). -"Turkey's Role in Middle East and Gulf Security" (Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, 2019), "Turkey and Egypt in the Yemen Crisis" in Stephen W. Day and Noel Brehony (eds.), Global, Regional and Local Dynamics in the Yemen Crisis, (Switzerland: Palgrave-Macmillan,), 2020.

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REVECCA PEDI

Associate Professor,
International Relations,
University of Macedonia

Revecca Pedi is an Associate Professor of International Relations at the Department of International and European Studies, University of Macedonia. Her research focus is on the International Relations of Small States. Revecca's work features in international peer-reviewed journals and edited volumes by international publishing houses. She is one of the two co-chairs of the "Small States in World Politics" Section of the European International Studies Association (EISA) and has been co-Chair of EISA's European Workshops in International Studies for 2021 and 2022. Prof. Pedi has published various academic articles, among which two of her most recent works focus on Small States. Her two latest works include The Republic of Cyprus in International and Regional Organizations: Towards a Mature Small State Status Seeking Strategy? in The Foreign Policy of the Republic of Cyprus and What Future for Small States After Unipolarity? Strategic Opportunities and Challenges in the Post-American World Order in Polarity in International Relations.

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Small state security strategies in the multiplex order: a view from the Balkans

My paper delves into small-state security scholarship and investigates small-state security strategies in multiplex order. It assesses the efficacy of the small-state strategic menu in the multiplex order; in doing so it analyzes the challenges and limitations that the current order poses to small-state strategies. Furthermore, my paper introduces the concept of smart balancing to highlight the combination of strategies that small states employ to pursue their security in the current order. The empirical part of this work focuses on Greece's efforts to increase its security and status. For this part, I rely on content analysis from primary resources and interviews with policymakers and armed forces officers. The paper sheds some new light on small-state security strategies in the multiplex order, and its findings are useful to practitioners and scholars who work on small-state security.



MARKO KOVAČEVIĆ

Assistant Professor,
Faculty of Political Science,
University of Belgrade, Serbia

Marko Kovačević is an Assistant Professor at the University of Belgrade, Faculty of Political Science. He earned his PhD in International and European Studies, with a dissertation on identity-role construction in foreign and security policies of small states at the United Nations. His research interests concern IR theory, international security studies and foreign policy analysis – with a focus on comparative regionalisms, state-building and various forms of state agency and practices within the UN system. Most recently, his articles were published in the *Journal of International Relations and Development*, *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* and *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal*. Kovačević is a co-editor of the *Journal of Regional Security* and a member of ISA, ACUNS, EISA, ECPR and CEEISA.

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Assessing the viability of small state strategies in the context of the war in Ukraine: a view from the Western Balkans

Theoretical exploration of war implications in Ukraine after Russia's military invasion of 2022 for the viability of small-state strategies in the Western Balkans. It seeks to conceptualize the relevant small states' responses to the multiple and intersecting crises of security, economy, and society that spread in Europe. To that aim, it builds upon the Marginality Constellations (MC) framework to explain the co-effects of competing for geopolitical presences and role expectations in a small state region still not integrated into the EU under a protracted perspective of membership. The war between Russia and Ukraine is conceptualized as a context-determining and structuring external shock that I argue, is most likely to shift and shape the roles and preferences of "would-be insider" small states in Europe from neutrality and hedging to alliance-shelter seeking. This paper shows that underlying MC can enable and constrain small-state strategy depending on its character. Although MC may shape favorably the initial policy responses of small states, as the war goes on, the role expectations now seem more demanding for those states that prefer divergent hedging strategies instead of alliance shelter-seeking, such as Serbia. Finally, the paper engages with the extant small state 'dilemmas' and concepts such as autonomy, integration, neutrality, alliances, and polarity.



ANA BOJINOVIĆ FENKO

*Professor and Researcher,
Faculty of Social Sciences,
University of Ljubljana*

Ana Bojinović Fenko is a Professor and Researcher in International Relations at the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences. She teaches various graduate courses on the the European Union and International Regionalism. Her fields of Research are Foreign Policy Analysis, International Regionalism, EU external action, Small states foreign policy, EU external action and EU enlargement policy. Empirically, she focuses on post-Yugoslav small states and EU enlargement policy towards Western Balkans states and the Mediterranean region. Prof. Fenko is also the Chair of International Relations at the Center of International Relations of the Ljubljana University.

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Regional practice of the anarchical culture in the Western Balkans: states' role as enemy, rival, or friend

This contribution will apply Wendt's (1999) logic of anarchical culture in international politics to the states of the Western Balkans region. Due to the historical recency of the geopolitical phenomenon and external influence in the creation of the Western Balkans region, general historical practices of international politics in the Balkans will also be considered. My contribution aims to assess the logic of culture in the Western Balkans region. Methodologically, the inter-subjective level of regional foreign policy actions and practices, will be analysed concerning their contribution to role internalisation (via fear, price or trust). The particular interest that I will focus on is the simultaneous practice of different roles, contested roles and conflictual actions by individual external and domestic states. An outcome of this contribution will offer an understanding of competing local (intra-state level), regional (inter-state level) and external (outside Western Balkans) representations of state roles and logics of anarchy in the Western Balkans region which bares relevance to non-resolved bilateral disputes, intra-state conflicts of ethnic dimensions, slow progress in EU accession process, etc.



NAIM RASHITI

*Executive Director,
Balkans Policy Research Group*

Western Balkans: The conglomerate of small states that needs a joint ambition to prevail

For more than two decades, small countries of the Western Balkans (WB) have achieved to consolidate their individual statehood, identity and foreign policy. Driven by security agendas, most Western Balkans states have successfully joined NATO. Those who have joined the NATO security umbrella enjoy security. Yet this has proven to be non-sufficient, and challenges within the Western Balkans states remained. Each state has failed to establish a proactive foreign policy and pursue more ambitious goals. WB states have remained ineffective in pursuing policies in the European Union and simultaneously ineffective in developing their own. They are heavily dependent on and driven by the international agendas of alliances. Small states become busy responding and scheduling to the calendar of events set by third parties, larger states or supranational institutions and fail to pursue important agendas for a common good. My presentation and the conclusions will draw from numerous lessons from practice, the behaviour of the small states and surrounding supranational institutions and introduce the idea of a new mantra, namely that to prevail, small states will need to act together for a common goal.

Naim Rashiti has 20 years of experience in public policy, research, advocacy, and EU & International affairs. He is the Executive Director of the Balkans Policy Research Group. Previously Mr. Rashiti served as Balkans Analyst for the International Crisis Group. He monitors and reports on the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, regional policy and security development and cooperation, and the EU approximation for the Western Balkans. Rashiti wrote more than 50 policy reports on domestic and broader regional issues, covering Kosovo, Albania, North Macedonia, and Serbia. Mr. Rashiti also served as a Research Fellow with the Brussels-based CEPS with a focus on the Rule of Law within the EU and Southeast Europe. His work, in recent years, focuses on reforms, public and foreign policies, good governance, and the resolution of bilateral disputes in the Western Balkans. He holds a BA degree in Engineering and IT, BA in Political science, a Postgraduate diploma in EU&Diplomacy, and an MA in International Relations from Fletcher School, Tufts University.

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STEFANO BIANCHINI

*Professor,
East European Politics and History,
University of Bologna, Italy*

Stefano Bianchini is a Professor of East European Politics and History at the University of Bologna. From 2015 to 2021, he was Rector's delegate for relations with Eastern Europe. Previously he was the director of the two-year Interdisciplinary Master of Arts in East European Studies (MIREES). He is visiting professor at the State University of St. Petersburg and holds an H.D. in Humanities from the Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas. He is a member of the Executive Committee and former Vice president of the Association for Studies of Nationalities (ASN) based at the Harriman Institute, Columbia University, New York and Executive Editor of the blind peer-review journal "Southeastern Europe". As an expert on Balkan issues, he has been an adviser of the ICTY in the Hague. Prof. Bianchini has published and co-edited 36 books and more than 200 articles in Italian, French, English and other languages.

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Between sovereignty wishes, and dependency. The endless challenges of small Balkans states in foreign policy

In modern times, the dichotomy of sovereignty wishes and external dependency in the Balkans dates back to the beginning of the 19th century and is related to the process of State-building. The Small Balkan states willing to achieve their independence attempted to establish their sovereignty in different ways. However, they suffered recurrently from the interferences between the Great Powers and their politics. This mechanism constantly reappeared in the following decades, between the two world wars and during the cold war. The European partition forced the small Balkan states to accept the role of client or satellite country, according to their dependency on the US or the USSR. Consequentially, the claims for independence and sovereignty were mainly addressed against the federal State and the communist ideology but rarely achieved without dependency on a powerful external player. Under these circumstances, the Small Balkan States have frequently expressed their aim to join the EU as member states, to strengthen their regional role but only a few of them succeeded. This contrasting picture of cooperation and rejection takes place together with the poor performance of the EU institutions and an increased interest from the great powers – such as Russia, China, and the US – to offer their support to fragile local players. In my presentation, I will discuss that the further partitions of the Yugoslav territories, the desire of small states for an independent role and the dependency strengthened by the regional fragility is again a determinant factor that affects the articulation of the foreign policies of the local countries.



DILAVER ARIKANA AÇAR

Assistant Professor,
Department of International Relations,
Yaşar University, Turkey

Dr Dilaver Arikana Açar completed his B.Sc., M.Sc. and PhD at the Department of International Relations at the Middle East Technical University (METU) in Turkey. He worked in the same department as a research assistant, where he did field research in various parts of the Balkans and later worked for the OSCE missions in Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Dr Açar spent a year as a PhD research fellow at the Department of War Studies, King's College London with the Jean Monnet Scholarship. After briefly teaching at the Turkish Military College, he joined the Department of International Relations at Yaşar University, Turkey as an assistant professor, where he currently teaches. Until recently, he served as the Vice-chair of the Yaşar University Center for Mediterranean Studies. His main areas of interest are foreign policies, Euro-Atlantic integration processes, small states in world affairs, and transition politics in the Balkan states in general, Albania and Kosovo in particular.

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Albania: A pragmatic small state playing on asymmetric relations in the international arena

Albanian state since its formation over various regimes has proven to be a survivor and a skilful applier of small state approaches and strategies in international relations. This gives Albania a specific characteristic and a kind of heritage among small states. Albania acts with a sense of recognition of its role and place as a small state in global and regional affairs. Except for the isolationist period, Albania has always had a tendency to seek a strong ally, preferably a global power. Under the new political and economic circumstances of the post-Cold War, Albania is facing domestic economic and political challenges, and once again, it moved on to develop a similar relationship, this time with the United States. Despite the fiercely competitive and antagonistic domestic party politics, the stance of politicians and the decision makers across the political spectrum has become Albania's pro-United States stance. Developing a close and special relationship with the US became a core principle of Albanian foreign policy along with making the Euro-Atlantic integration a priority for economic development and security. Ultimately Albania stands as a case of the pragmatic applier of small state policies to survive and have a role and place exceeding its size in the international arena.





ADRI NURELLARI

*Party Secretary,
Democratic Party of Kosovo*

Mr. Nurellari is member of the Executive Committee of DPK and used to be advisor of the former speaker of the Parliament of Kosovo, Mr. Kadri Veseli, as well as of the former President and PM of Kosovo, Mr. Hashim Thaçi. Previously, he was the adviser of the PM of Albania on public policies.

Mr. Nurellari has studied history at the University of Tirana and has continued postgraduate studies at UCL, LSE and University of Cambridge. In addition, Mr. Nurellari has been the founder and director of the Albanian Liberal Institute, a "free market think tank", and has worked as a columnist and analyst in the field of politics and media. He has also worked as lecturer at the University of Tirana, UNYT and Southeast European University of Tetovo, North Macedonia.

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A small state with a big problem: Kosovo's foreign policy deadlocked in between peacemakers and spoilers

The object of my presentation is the foreign policy behavior of small states by taking into consideration the case of Kosovo which faces the major challenge of a quasi "frozen conflict" with Serbia. Kosovo has been struggling to finalize a peace deal with Serbia but the negotiations have been seriously hindered by intra-group ethnic outbidding tactics that have resulted in political instability and a series of a series of short-lived governments. I will focus on analyzing the case of Kosovo's foreign policy with regards to the EU-facilitated Dialogue with Serbia and how such a challenge has been highly influenced by domestic political conflict.



LEJLA RAMIĆ-MESIHović

Assistant Professor,
International Burch University, Sarajevo

Lejla Ramić-Mesihović has been dealing with European integration issues for the last two decades, both in practical and academic terms. She works as Assistant Professor at the International Burch University in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. After several years in journalism, she worked for 15 years in the EU institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina as an adviser (EU Special Representative's Office) and servant (EU Delegation to BiH). Her professional focus is on analysis and policy advocacy regarding the EU-BiH relations, as well as reforming Bosnia and Herzegovina towards EU accession and democratisation. Mesihović has also managed project interventions of the UNDP devoted to women's leadership. The focus of her academic interest includes the geopolitics of the southern part of the Balkans as the follow-up of her previous academic research – namely, an MA in Macedonian foreign policy and a doctoral dissertation on the impact of Albanian ethnic identity on the stability of the southern part of the Balkans.

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Key challenges of foreign policy of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The foreign policy of Bosnia and Herzegovina has been evolving since the declaration of independence from Yugoslavia under numerous challenges imposed by the 1992-95 war, both on the front of recognition and seeking support defend itself. Within the context of post-war realities, BiH diplomacy has often struggled to maximise its impact. These efforts have, most certainly, reached their climax in relation to activities that led to the selection of BiH into non-permanent membership of the UNSC and its successful performance in 2010 and 2011. Joining NATO has been undisputable until April 2006, but the process has continued despite the opposing forces. Firm strategic foreign policy orientation towards European integration has been undisputable, with two-thirds support of the population confirmed in 2022. Over the last decade, there has been an increasing number of substantial frictions between the DPA-based peace process that still deals with numerous ambitions which originate from those which were some of the key motivators of the war and demanding process of integration into the European Union.

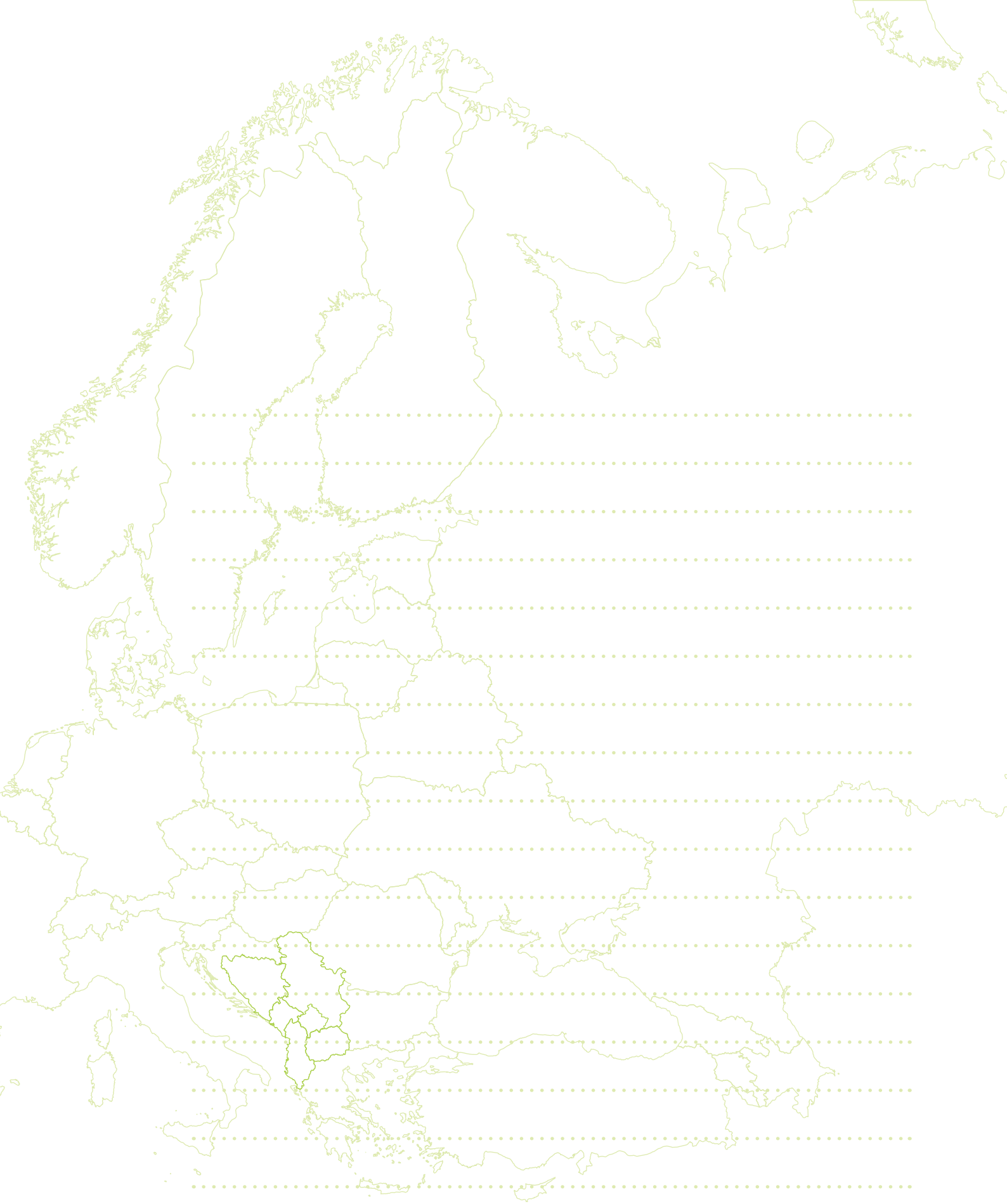


NOTES



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