

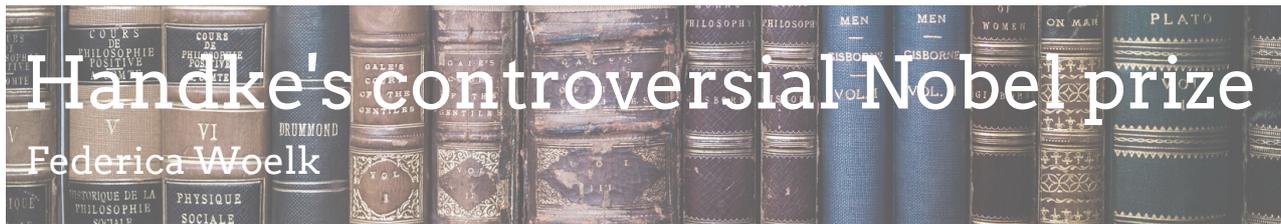
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Natolin Friends of the Balkans Society



BALKANNEWS

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Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, North Macedonia and Kosovo have boycotted the Nobel Prize ceremony in protest against the literature accolade awarded to Austrian author Peter Handke. Handke has been accused of genocide denial for questioning events during the Balkan Wars of the 1990s — including the Srebrenica massacre, in which some 8,000 Muslim men and boys were murdered. He has also been criticized strongly for delivering a eulogy at the funeral of Slobodan Milosevic.

In his writings, Handke claimed that “the Muslims” had staged their own massacres in Sarajevo and then blamed the Serbs. The doubts casts on the massacre of thousands of Muslim men and boys in Srebrenica in 1995 have sparked outrage, in particular in BiH. In an essay for the French newspaper *Libération* in 2006, Handke wrote: “Let’s stop comparing Slobodan Milosevic to Hitler ... and let’s never again use the expression ‘concentration camps’ for the camps installed during the Yugoslav war.” “Let’s stop linking the massacres (amongst which, in the plural, those in Srebrenica in July 1995 were by far the most abominable) to Serbian forces or paramilitaries. Let us also listen to the survivors of Muslim massacres in the many Serbian villages around Srebrenica.”

Thus his award is a slap in the face of the victims; reactions in BiH have obviously been very strong. And it does neither help the efforts for transitional justice nor the process of reconciliation, which are so important, but still fragile, in the region. No serious ‘coming to terms with the past’ can be seen so far. Journalists who covered the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, meanwhile, protest against Handke’s award by describing what they saw during the conflict using the hashtag #BosniaWarJournalists. They and many others consider the award a huge mistake, an insult to all victims and to their families and a favour to pure revisionism. For understanding history, it is fundamental to respect the memory of the victims. On revisionism no sustainable future of living together can be built.

Reforming the EU accession procedure: the French turnaround

Louise Guillon

Just a few weeks after President Macron vetoed the opening of accession talks with North-Macedonia and Albania, France proposed to reform the current 35 chapter-based accession procedure. The draft proposal provides for the completion of a seven-stage process, and gradual access to EU programmes, sectoral policies and financing opportunities, such as structural funds.

In case of backsliding on European standards and fundamental values, a reversibility clause might be used by the EU to suspend the accession talks. The overall objective is to improve the process efficiency, strengthen conditionality and increase tangible benefits for citizens. But what if such a step-by-step approach was subtly seeking to slow the enlargement of the EU?

Denmark expressed its entire support to the French non-paper and the renewing of the accession process. However, the debate is still open. Indeed, nine other member states - namely Austria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland and Slovenia - released a new common proposal which challenges the idea of consecutive chapter completion and suggests simultaneity instead.

The Banquet in Blitva, M. Krleža

Louise Guillon



Written in the thirties by Miroslav Krleža (1893-1981), the Banquet in Blitva - *Banquet u Blitvi* - is usually seen as one of the masterpieces of the Croatian literature. The novel depicts with genius the authoritarian tendencies of the inter-war period in Europe.

The plot takes place in an imaginary Baltic country which echoes of course the budding Yugoslavia. Blitva is ruled with an iron fist by Colonel Barutanski, whose former best friend Dr. Nielsen is also his worst political opponent. Barutanski is a true paranoid nationalist. He freed his country from foreign oppression, and cares a lot about the fate of all Blitvians remaining in the neighbouring hated country of Blatvia. Nielsen is a European educated intellectual, endangering the regime through his embarrassing dissenting newspaper. Very soon, the two characters engage in an ideological struggle about the future of Blitva and the role both of them have to play in the establishment of that ideal.

Miroslav Krleža joined the Communist party of Yugoslavia in 1918, but was expelled twenty years later due to his refusal of conformism in Arts especially and his condemnation of the Great Purge in the Soviet Union. Despite the occupation of Yugoslavia in 1941 and the creation of a fascist puppet state in Croatia, the novelist refused to join Tito's resistance movement. Still, he became friends with the Yugoslav statesman. After WWII, Krleža advocated for Croatian independence and lobbied for freedom of speech and the creation of the Croatian Institute of Lexicography.



La Macédoine du Nord traverse une crise politique depuis Décembre 2019. Elle a été provoquée par le refus de l'Union Européenne (UE) d'octroyer le statut de candidat au pays. Conséquence, le Premier Ministre Zoran Zaev a donné sa démission le 3 Janvier. Skopje commence l'année 2020 avec un gouvernement intérimaire. Oliver Spasovski, ancien ministre de l'intérieur, gère cette transition jusqu'aux élections anticipées, programmées pour le 12 Avril.

Arrivé au pouvoir en 2017, le social-démocrate Zoran Zaev (SDSM) incarnait la rupture. Après avoir battu Nikola Gruevski, entaché d'affaires de corruption et d'abus de pouvoir, Zaev avait fait de l'ouverture des négociations avec l'UE une de ses priorités. Le grand accomplissement de son mandat restera l'accord de Prespa, obtenu avec la Grèce en 2018. Cet accord a permis de résoudre un désaccord sur le nom du pays. La résolution du litige était la condition *sine qua non* d'entrée du pays dans l'UE et l'OTAN. Cet accord a ouvert de nouvelles perspectives pour la Macédoine du Nord.

Zaev a réaffirmé que pour les Macédoniens, « l'intégration euro-atlantique est notre objectif [...] et que cette inspiration demeurera ». Cela n'a pas empêché des critiques d'émerger dans les Balkans et en Europe centrale en général, blâmant l'UE et les conséquences déstabilisatrice de ses décisions. La France est particulièrement pointée du doigt. Emmanuel Macron est le chef de file des pays ayant refusé le statut de candidat à la république balkanique.

« Macédoine du Nord : Elections anticipées après le refus d'adhésion à l'UE », euronews, dernière modification 21 Janvier 202, lien : <https://fr.euronews.com/embed/904086>

Nektaria STAMOULI, "North Macedonia's PM resign", 3 January 2020, Politico.eu, lien : <https://www.politico.eu/article/north-macedonian-pm-zoran-zaev-resigns/>

"Macédoine du Nord : Elections anticipées après le refus d'adhésion à l'UE", Euronews s21 octobre 2019, lien: <https://fr.euronews.com/2019/10/21/macedoine-du-nord-elections-anticipees-apres-le-refus-d-adhesion-a-l-ue> (Image)

What's next?

27th January in ACS at 7pm - EXPERT DISCUSSION

High-level panel discussion followed by a Q&A session on "The current state of EU enlargement as seen from Albania and North Macedonia" in the presence of:

- **Ilir Aliaj** - Executive Director of CDDI and also Member of Board of Directors and founder of European Movement Albania, Tirana
- **Francois Lafond** - Adviser to the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs in the Republic of North Macedonia, Skopje
- **Clive Rumbold** - Deputy Head of the Western Balkans Division at the EEAS, Brussels
- **Marta Szpala** - Senior Fellow at Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich (Centre for Eastern Studies), Warsaw (Moderator)

February - STUDENT PRESENTATION

Iris VAN LOON and Mathilde TCHOUNIKINE will present us their respective experience at the Embassy of the Netherlands in Kosovo and at the Institute for Development Policy in Pristina. This informal presentation is a great opportunity to learn more about Kosovo and the challenges it is currently facing.



The poster features a dark blue background with a red and white map of the Balkans in the top left corner. The text is centered and reads: "Panel discussion on The Current State of EU Enlargement as seen From Albania & North Macedonia". Below this, it states "27th January at 7pm in ACS". The names and titles of the panelists are listed: Ilir Aliaj, Francois Lafond, Clive Rumbold, and Marta Szpala. At the bottom, there are three call-to-action buttons: "Hajde me ne! (AL)", "Ajde! (MK)", and "Join us!". Logos for the College of Europe and the Students of the College of Europe are visible in the top right corner.

Panel discussion on
The Current State of EU Enlargement as seen From Albania & North Macedonia

27th January at 7pm in ACS

Ilir Aliaj - Executive Director of CDDI and also Member of Board of Directors and founder of European Movement Albania, Tirana

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Hajde me ne! (AL) **Ajde! (MK)** **Join us!**