

Stabilization and Progress in the Western Balkans

Proceedings of the Symposium 2010, Basel, Switzerland September 17-19

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In order to create a forum for a critical discussion of the situation in the West Balkans, we, a sociologist and a political geographer at Basel University, organized the international Symposium – ‘Stabilization and Progress in the Western Balkans’.

Eleven years after the end of the Yugoslav Wars we wanted to offer scholars from the West Balkans an opportunity for contact and a basis for discussions with their West European and American counterparts.

The Balkans have been a centre of crisis for more than a decade. Armed conflicts have brought the people death, expulsion, destruction and untold suffering. But the efforts of the West and NATO intervention have failed to bring stability and real progress so far.

The Symposium at Basel University was planned as an interdisciplinary event. The complex issues were elucidated by historians, geographers, sociologists and political scientists. This enabled East and West European scholars and their American counterparts to exchange their somewhat divergent views.

The papers covered a broad range of subjects, from historical causes, aspects of postwar economic and social development and sociocultural consequences of the democratization process. Special attention was devoted to the situation of minorities, the refugee problem and the security situation in the fragile states of the West Balkans and also to the responsibility of the EU and USA for the general stagnation in the region.

The Symposium was intended to illustrate differing interpretations of the events of the past ten years, and to encourage discussion between speakers and participants at the event. In particular, students of Basel University were offered a chance to listen to scholarly analyses at first hand and reflect on them critically.

The International Symposium – Stabilization and Progress in the Western Balkans was held from 17–19 September 2010 under the patronage of the executive council of the canton of Basel-Stadt. We thank our generous sponsors, the Swiss National Science Foundation, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the Freiwillige Akademische Gesellschaft and the Max-Geldner-Stiftung.

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