



***ASSESSING THE WESTERN BALKANS'
WAY FORWARD***

High Time for Action in the Western Balkans

Principles, Policies, Proposals

Executive Summary

Sarajevo - New York – Baku

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In 2018, the National Committee on American Foreign Policy (NCAFP), in cooperation with the East West Institute (EWI), published [Time for Action in the Western Balkans](#), an analytical report and set of policy recommendations for the future of US policy vis-à-vis the region. While some prescriptions laid out by that report have come to pass, many continue to require careful attention from policymakers both in the United States and Europe.

Critically, the key recommendation from the 2018 report that can be carried into the present implores key officials from both sides of the Atlantic to clarify and coordinate their efforts to more closely integrate the Western Balkans into European and transatlantic political, economic and security institutions. This remains one of, if not the paramount concern for policymakers and stakeholders in the United States, European Union and the region.

From late 2019 to June 2021, the NCAFP, Nizami Ganjavi International Center (NGIC), and Shared Societies and Values Foundation Sarajevo (FSSV) held a series of conferences and meetings designed to spur proposals for action in line with renewed engagement on the part of the US and EU.

In guiding the proposals to follow, six core principles must govern continued engagement with the region:

- A sense of urgency demanding action;
- Commitment to consolidating pro-Western political forces;
- Understanding that an EU agenda is at the heart of all action;
- Belief in cooperation through values rather than competition over borders;
- Drive toward investment, economic integration, and infrastructure corridors;
- And a commitment to normalizing the Serbia-Kosovo relationship.

Ultimately, six key proposals came to the fore:

- It is time to integrate the Western Balkans into the EU Single Market.
- Economic development efforts should focus bolstering transportation and digital infrastructure.
- The Western Balkans should proactively develop in line with the EU Green Deal, namely via a coal-exit strategy.
- A regional initiative toward natural disaster and pandemic-related responses is timely and necessary, and provides solid footing for further regional integration.
- Continued transparency and engagement with regard to small arms agreements will be necessary, and offers an opportunity to build regional confidence.
- It is crucial that the NATO missions in both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo continue in furtherance of regional peace and security.

Ultimately, this “Season One” of NCAFP-NGIC-FSSV efforts concluded with a “hybrid” Forum in Sarajevo in June 2021 aiming to present and discuss the outcomes of smaller sessions and chart a possible path forward for the region. The organizers look forward to continuing this work over the course of 2021 and 2022.