



BELGRADE  
SECURITY  
FORUM

Belgrade, October 17 -19, 2018

**FINDING ANSWERS  
TOGETHER TO  
THE NEW NORMAL**



CONFERENCE REPORT

# BELGRADE SECURITY FORUM 2018

## Conference Report



Launched in 2011, the [Belgrade Security Forum \(BSF\)](#) has rapidly become the most important security conference between Istanbul and Vienna. It aims to create a relevant policy venue that will contribute to the development of a security community in the Balkan region as well as providing a meaningful contribution to the ongoing European and global security discussion. Initiated and hosted by three partner civil society organizations – [the Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence](#), [the European Movement in Serbia](#) and [the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy](#) – the BSF creates a place where Balkan policy and opinion makers and members of the academic community and civil society can meet with their counterparts from other parts of the world in order to exchange views on the pressing security issues of the day.

The BSF's core mission and values:

- Europe as a community of values, with a stronger foreign and security policy
- The Balkans (South East Europe) as an actor in and subject of global debates
- Nurturing greater mutual, rather than particular, interests
- Democratization of “high politics” by insisting on a culture of inclusive dialogue
- Debates that are topical and insightful
- Autonomous, created by three civil society organizations

### The BSF's Strategic goals 2016-2020:

- 1) To be a point of reference and “the place to be” for discussion of key developments in the Balkans;
- 2) To advance the debate on the issues Europe faces and inform the region accordingly;
- 3) To enable the Balkans to contribute to the resolution of some of the key issues faced by Europe, such as how to strengthen Europe's global “actorness”;
- 4) To strengthen the BSF community.

## BELGRADE SECURITY FORUM 2018

### BELGRADE SECURITY FORUM

BSF 2018 was held from 17-19 October under the heading “Finding Answers Together to the New Normal”. **The ongoing uncertainty and unpredictability is no longer a form of crisis; unpredictability has become the “new normal” in international relations. Actors no longer feel committed to the rules and institutions of the post-Cold War period.** This new balance can be observed in the phenomena and effects of the first artificial intelligence applications, as well as the accelerated and increasing automation of labour and the global economy overall. The powerful growing economies of the Middle and Far East mark the 21st century as the emerging “Asian Century.” In this new world, Europe and transatlantic relations are confronted by increased pressure from populism, which strikes at the foundations of the European project and the relations built after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In this new order, institutions must be redesigned if the challenges that threaten to collapse them are to be understood better and overcome. Moreover, **in 2018 the Balkans is at a turning point – the EU's new Enlargement Strategy has created a sense of urgency among regional leaders, which is reflected primarily in the need to find solutions for old disputes.**

Against this background, the Belgrade Security Forum 2018 dealt with the following questions: Where are we in this state of the “new normal”? Where do we go from here? How do we ensure progress for everyone in an unpredictable future?



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By all accounts, the eighth edition of the Forum was the most ambitious so far. With some pride we report that over the course of three days, 112 panellists interacted with close to 800 registered guests – diplomats, scholars and policy makers from 42 different countries in the presence of more than 200 accredited domestic and foreign journalists. They attended a grand total of 20 thematic sessions and panels and one special pre-event, covering most of the principal political and security issues surrounding the future of this region and Europe more widely.



The list of speakers at BSF 2018 included (but was not limited to):

**Ana Brnabić**, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia; **Aleksandar Vučić**, President of the Republic of Serbia; **Alexander Van der Bellen**, President of Austria; **Kyle Scott**, United States Ambassador to the Republic of Serbia; **Leonard Benardo**, Vice President, Open Society Foundations; **Sabine Stöhr**, Head of Department for SEE, Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Federal Republic of Germany; **Matthew Palmer**, Deputy Assistant Secretary, U.S. State Department; **Sarah Chayes**, Author of "Thieves of State: Why Corruption Threatens Global Security"; **Shada Islam**, Director Europe and Geopolitics, Friends of Europe; **Natalie Nougayrède**, Columnist, *The Guardian*; **Mark Fitzpatrick**, Executive Director, International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS Americas) as well as many others.

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### BSF ACADEMIC EVENT

The BSF Academic Event is a unique feature of the Forum that enables interaction and networking between the academic and policy communities and provides theoretical input for the policy debates. This year's Academic Event, organized in partnership with the H2020 project “EUNPACK”, was entitled “How Conflict Sensitive Is EU Crisis Response?”. Combining bottom-up perspectives with an institutional approach, this event was aimed at increasing our understanding of how EU crisis responses function and are received on the ground.

The Academic Event started with a keynote lecture delivered by Professor Roger MacGinty from the School of Government and International Affairs at Durham University, entitled “How Do We Listen to the Local in Times of Crisis?”. In his address, Professor MacGinty talked about the difficulty of defining the term “local”, especially when it is used by international organizations that seek to ground the legitimacy of their actions in this term. He pointed out that “the 'local' is even more local than many of us realise”, concluding that internationals should engage not only with local institutions but also with the “common people”. Two thematically organized panels and closing remarks followed. Each panel consisted of four academic paper presentations followed by comments from one discussant, while the closing remarks were delivered by senior researchers at the “EUNPACK” project, Pernille Rieker and Morten Bøås.



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The first academic panel focussed on local perceptions of the EU as a crisis management actor, as well as on the potential lessons that the EU can take from NATO, the UN and the OSCE. The second panel inquired into the effectiveness of the EU's crisis response and border management, investigating the full cycle of EU response – intentions and motivations, policy implementation, evaluation of impact effectiveness and local actors' perceptions, reactions and ownership – as well as analysing the balance between security and development in the EU's crisis response approach. Both panels discussed case studies, including Kosovo, South Ossetia, Libya, Ukraine, Iraq, Mali and Afghanistan. Finally, the closing remarks examined two gaps in the EU's crisis response: the intention-implementation gap and the implementation-local reception/perception gap.

Recommendations/action points:

- The EU should learn from its own mistakes and adopt good practice from other international peacekeeping actors in order to improve its efficiency in crisis response.
- The EU's crisis response should take into account conflict sensitivity and conflict specificity – the local political and social situation should always be considered.
- As a peacekeeping actor, the EU should include locals at various levels and should put greater emphasis on local ownership.



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### METHODS, CAREERS AND NETWORKING CAFÉ

The BSF Academic Event is traditionally complemented by an additional program for PhD students and other interested researchers, entitled the Methods, Careers and Networking Café. This innovative session encourages participants to engage in informal and unstructured yet focussed discussions with their hosts, who are senior and established academics. The hosts of this year's Methods Careers and Networking Café were Roger MacGinty, who talked about “the perils, opportunities and fun of field research in conflict-affected areas”, Morten Bøås, who also focussed on fieldwork as a method in IR, Jozef Batora, who provided career advice to emerging IR scholars from Central and Eastern Europe and Rok Zupančič, who discussed the methodological approach for an H2020 research project. The Method Café was attended by over 20 doctoral and post-doctoral students from various countries.

#### Tweets

[SonjaStojanovicGajic @StojanovicSonja](#)

The local is not just a place, but enacted experience, networked, populated with informal institutions. It seems [@rogermacginty](#) calls for hiring more anthropologists to help #EU with [#crisismanagement](#) [#BelSecForum](#) [@eunpack\\_eu](#)  
<https://twitter.com/StojanovicSonja/status/1052475661229707265>

[Pernille Rieker @Prieker1](#)

In the first Academic panel at [#BelSecForum](#) [@StevenBlockmans](#) argues that Conflict sensitivity is often neglected in practice in #EU crisis response. [@eunpack\\_eu](#)  
<https://twitter.com/Prieker1/status/1052495073433346048>

[EUNPACK @eunpack\\_eu](#)

EU [#CDSP](#) missions in Mali and Niger are not just about stabilisation and fighting terrorism but mainly about stemming [#migration](#) flows — building a new European border, in the [#Sahel](#) rather than the MED. [#Agadez](#) as a new migration hub...? Morten Boas at [#BelSecForum](#)  
[https://twitter.com/eunpack\\_eu/status/1052550366116683776](https://twitter.com/eunpack_eu/status/1052550366116683776)

## BELGRADE SECURITY FORUM 2018

### Strategic goal 1: The BSF as a point of reference and “the place to be” to discuss key developments in the Balkans

The BSF seeks to contribute to the resolution of the political and security issues that are burdening the Balkan region and slowing down its European integration. Moreover, the BSF contributes to the democratization of policy debates about the Balkans by inviting and hosting not only high-level decision makers but also think-tankers, academics, civil society activists and journalists. This edition of the Forum continued the tradition of giving a voice to various stakeholders engaged in Balkan politics.

In light of the new EU Strategy for the Western Balkans, adopted in February this year, which envisages the possibility of Serbia's and Montenegro's accession in 2025, two sessions of BSF 2018 discussed where the Balkans will be in 2025. The plenary panel “Balkans 2025” assessed that the future of the Balkans is uncertain and identified the gap between citizens and political leaders as one of the main obstacles hindering EU integration for the WB. This panel pointed out that it is necessary for both Balkan countries and the EU to modify their approach to accession. **While the panellists from the Balkans insisted on putting greater emphasis on the rule of law, the “internationals” argued that openness to various solutions (referring particularly to the dispute between Kosovo and Serbia) was the key to success.** The future of the Balkans was the main topic of another session which gathered prominent think-tankers from the region and reaffirmed some of the main points of the plenary panel “Balkan 2025” – namely, the importance of the rule of law and the problem of political elites' disconnection from citizens. This session also discussed the **question of state capture, which burdens virtually all Balkan states**, concluding that a bottom-up approach and the involvement of citizens in policy making is urgently needed.

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Like every year, the BSF hosted a debate about the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue, which focussed on the impasse in this process. Only the Serbian Government representative had a positive view on the direction in which the dialogue is going, while the other panellists argued that the negotiation process was imposed externally without any genuine will from the two parties to solve the problems. It was pointed out that the rhetoric had not moved since the 1990s, and a fear of new violent incidents was expressed. However, all the panellists were against divisions along ethnic lines, or at least they declared so. In another Balkan country, Bosnia and Herzegovina, such divisions are perceived as a threat. The BSF session dedicated to the situation in **Bosnia pointed out that if Bosnia is to move forward, the principle of ethnicity that rules currently has to be replaced with the concept of abstract citizenship.** Some argued that the recent elections could be seen as a positive change, as well as the recent massive “Pravda za Davida” (“Justice for David”) protests, which united citizens across ethnic lines.

One prerequisite for progress in the Balkans is reconciliation and dealing with the legacies of past wars and atrocities. Two decades since the end of the wars in former Yugoslavia, and despite the spending of millions of dollars on justice reform and **reconciliation initiatives, reconciliation between and within societies and communities remains a work-in-progress.** The BSF session dealing with reconciliation pointed to several problems related to this issue – first there was a lack of evidence, while later the problem was the lack of a strategic vision for what reconciliation is and what it is aimed at. While reconciliation in the Balkans has been successful at certain levels, the panel concluded that a lot of work is still to be done by politicians, schools and the media.

On a more positive note, Matthew Palmer, Deputy Assistant Secretary at the US State Department, judged that with political will and hard work, Balkan countries can move forward to a prosperous future. He also stressed that the USA does not have a preferred outcome for the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue, and notwithstanding that the dialogue has lasted for seven years, he pointed out that dialogue and cooperation are the key to success. Also on the topic of Serbia-Kosovo relations, **Prime Minister of Serbia Ana Brnabić stated that the “frozen conflict” was holding Serbia back,** insisting that the problems started after Kosovo declared its independence in 2008. She also pointed out that new investments are crucial if inequality is to be reduced, neglecting the fact that economic growth does not necessarily lead to more equality. Despite numerous reports of a decline in media freedom in Serbia, Brnabić claimed that her government is making an effort to protect and strengthen media freedom.

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### Recommendations/action points:

- In order to move towards a more prosperous future, Balkan governments must tackle the problems of corruption, the lack of rule of law and the lack of political accountability.
- On the other hand, the EU should also modify its approach to accession and put more emphasis on reforms in the area of the rule of law.
- The Belgrade-Pristina dialogue must not be perceived as a zero-sum game, but as a process aimed at improving peoples' lives.  
Active citizenship is needed; people must be included in decision-making processes at various levels.

### Tweets

[SonjaStojanovicGajic @StojanovicSonja](#)  
Business as usual in #EU accession is not working anymore, it could even lead to backsliding of democracy, media freedoms in frontrunning countries due to #StateCapture @jadviga #belsecforum <https://twitter.com/StojanovicSonja/status/1052586941936414720>

[Belgrade Forum @BelSecForum](#)  
Exchange of territories will not solve any problems in #Kosovo and will only reignite territorial issues in #Balkans and

in parts of the EU, like in South Tyrol. - [Sabine Stohr @GermanyDiplo](#)  
[#BelSecForum #bordercorrection #dialogue](#)  
<https://twitter.com/BelSecForum/status/1052892763962961920>

[REKOM ~ KOMRA @REKOM\\_KOMRA](#)  
[@DenisaKost](#): We need to stop thinking of reconciliation as a result and start thinking of it as a process. [#BelSecForum](#)  
[https://twitter.com/REKOM\\_KOMRA/status/1053202325169414144](https://twitter.com/REKOM_KOMRA/status/1053202325169414144)

[Belgrade Forum @BelSecForum](#)  
Social activists in Serbia have a mostly negative view of all foreign actors, mainly because of disillusionment in the EU accession process. In Macedonia the perception is more positive. - [Jelena Vasiljević @IFDT\\_Beograd #BelSecForum](#)  
[https://twitter.com/BelSecForum/status/1052929385127383040?s=09&fbclid=IwAR3vLcTlFD92QMWnoLfBcMlaB\\_TQ0smdBWHRLswWzBGtvQ22copjDZr0lbi](https://twitter.com/BelSecForum/status/1052929385127383040?s=09&fbclid=IwAR3vLcTlFD92QMWnoLfBcMlaB_TQ0smdBWHRLswWzBGtvQ22copjDZr0lbi)

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### Strategic goal 2: The BSF advances the debate on the issues Europe faces and informs the region accordingly

Although primarily focussed on the Balkans and its EU perspective, the BSF strives to discuss global and European security concerns and advance the debate about these issues in the Balkans. To that end, the Forum hosts experts from EU member states and non-EU capitals, who contribute to a better understanding of global security debates among Balkan audiences.

During plenary panel 3, The Asian Century, **speakers could not reach consensus over whether the Asian Century is a reality.** However, Asia does now have more influence outside the states that comprise it. The main topic of discussion was China and its relations with the European Union and the United States of America. China is currently in a compelling position; its strategic documents define a vision comprising the maintenance of a role in international relations while also broadening its impact via significant progress in investments outside China. **China is pursuing more comprehensive relations with the EU, but is also collaborating substantively with Russia. Speakers pointed out that the European Union is still facing West, while the USA's power is declining, although China is not taking an aggressive position in order to fill the resultant void.** While China was the focus of the panel, it was pointed out that there is more to Asia than China, and China has significant disagreements with several Asian states. India, the most prominent such state, faces its own compelling challenge of dealing with this issue.



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Relations between major global powers was also the topic of a breakout session dedicated to relations between Russia and the West. The panel focussed on European relations with Russia, but given the complexity of Russia's position in international relations, other state and non-state actors were brought up in the discussion. Speakers discussed some of the issues that burden relations between Russia and the West. Russia's stance on the Ukrainian and Syrian questions was brought up, and it was mentioned that Chinese-Russian alignment is a possible challenge for relations between the West and Russia. The role of NATO is also important when talking about relations between Russia and the West. NATO and the European Union are developing their own capabilities in order to position themselves and be taken seriously. In-between countries that could be under the influence of both sides were also discussed. **Countries like Finland or the Western Balkans could be in Russian's area of interest, and it is most important for them to develop not only their own security capacities but also a stable political system based on democratic values.**

"What happens in the Middle East never stays in the Middle East" was the key message of the breakout session dedicated to turmoil in that region. The speakers agreed that the Middle East still faces the immense challenges of democratization, advancing human rights and resolving violent conflict. The process is also burdened by the intense relations between the region's lead countries, but also by non-state actors like ISIS. It is obvious that if progress is possible for the Middle East, it will not follow a straight line. The region is facing population rises, with young people being increasingly included in the process. Speakers expressed different levels of optimism about projecting future success for the region. Where some see encouraging prospects for the involvement of young people in improving their countries, others see much more danger in a disaffected and impoverished generation suppressed by still authoritarian regimes. The Middle East is also a stage for global players. Proximity to and cooperation with some of the region's countries give Russia an important role in Middle East developments. The USA, another traditional power, also has a role in the region. New players have stepped into the game recently, and the Middle East faces the rise of a Chinese presence in the region. Different approaches and the global powers' various allies influence developments and affect the region's stability. There are various views about the likelihood of new wars in the Middle East, but there is some agreement that countries outside the West have a role to play in the region's future and that this role should avoid the ongoing, disruptive tendencies their present policies exhibit.

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Relations and cooperation between the USA and Germany are often of immense importance for regional development. The issues faced by the Western Balkans and the return of geopolitics were explored in a panel that explored the engagement of the two major global actors. The importance of cooperation between regional actors, with support coming from outside the region, is key to answering important questions that burden the Western Balkans. The dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina and its possible outcome was highlighted. **The USA is focussing more on achieving a solution that satisfies both sides, while Germany points out that the solution must be durable, because otherwise the result could further prolong the conflict rather than solving it.** The panellists highlighted the importance of giving support to regional actors (e.g. Serbia) on their path to European integration, further business development and investment, as well as the need for leaders to show patience and courage and for people to show commitment.



### Recommendations/action points:

- A durable solution for both sides in the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue must be found, with commitment from both regional and global actors to making it sustainable.
- The solution of important regional challenges lies in the further democratization of regional actors, even if the root of the challenges is to be found in historical heritage and global actors' different approaches to the region.
- Overly generalized approaches should not be taken when looking at Asia, but rather caution should be used in taking account of the individual interests and positions of the states that comprise it.
- West-Russia relations could be further damaged by the emerging alignment between Russia and China, and the West should be strategically prepared.

## BELGRADE SECURITY FORUM 2018

 Tweets

Shada Islam @shada\_islam  
 Future of #Eurasia will depend on whether governments ensure #gender equality - #Asian governments too often ignore need for #womens' empowerment #ASEM #BelSecForum @FriendsofEurope [https://twitter.com/shada\\_islam/status/1052964409344188422?s=09](https://twitter.com/shada_islam/status/1052964409344188422?s=09)

Stefan Vladislavljev @vladislavljev\_s  
 China's Belt and Road Initiative has 2 characteristics: A lot of projects has already existed before China came in play. Other is that some European countries are liking towards China as an alternative. #BelSecForum #AsianCentury [https://twitter.com/vladislavljev\\_s/status/1052929707124113408?s=09](https://twitter.com/vladislavljev_s/status/1052929707124113408?s=09)

SonjaStojanovicGajic @StojanovicSonja  
 Seokwoo Kim it will be Asian century because of speed of growth, unless there is instability within #China or inter-state conflict #BelSecForum <https://twitter.com/StojanovicSonja/status/1052928925351989248?s=09>Check

Katarina Djokic @kolofdjuti  
 Rather than fearing Russian electoral meddling, Western countries should address social disparity and undereducation at home, stresses @UliTKuehn at a dynamic #BelSecForum discussion. <https://twitter.com/kolofdjuti/status/1052899167608156165?s=09>

Niklas Nováký @NiklasNovaky 18. okt  
 Discussing the future of #WesternBalkans countries' European integration process at #BelSecForum. Meanwhile, China is also increasing the size of its footprint in the region, including through soft power measures such as this one I saw when skimming through a local news paper <https://twitter.com/NiklasNovaky/status/1052936503612051456>

Belgrade Forum @BelSecForum @nnougayrede asked Ambassadors about territorial exchange between Serbia and Kosovo, and different approach of those two countries. H.E. Schieb: Germany thinks that it is bad idea and it is opposing it. H.E. Scott: USA is in favor of durable agreement between actors #BelSecForum <https://twitter.com/BelSecForum/status/1052973378104152071>

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**Strategic goal 3: The Belgrade Security Forum calls on the Balkans to contribute to the resolution of some of the key issues faced by Europe, including the question of how to strengthen Europe's global “actorness”**

The BSF aims to contribute to an active role for the Balkans in the wider European debate on pressing security and political issues. After decades of the Balkans being perceived as a European security problem, the BSF's strategic goal is to foster the idea of the Balkans as part of the solution.

The Grand Opening of this year's Forum hosted President of Austria Alexander van der Bellen and President of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić. Both panellists expressed their optimism about a European future for the Balkans and underlined the importance of cooperation among nation states. **The Austrian President pointed out that the idea that nation states do better on their own is old fashioned and wrong: “no single country can prosper today without cooperation. It is better to be a giant of welfare than a nationalistic dwarf”.** President Vučić declared Serbia's commitment to judicial reform and the rule of law, as well as its commitment to regional peace and stability. He blamed the Pristina authorities for stagnation in the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue. On the other hand, President van der Bellen warned that making the Western Balkans part of the EU needs courage from both the EU and the WB.



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In light of the challenges faced by the EU – such as climate change, migration and the rise of populism – the BSF discussed how to “reinvent” the EU in order to enable it to confront these challenges. The panel asserted that the line between internal and external challenges has faded significantly, creating a more complex security environment. **The need to give a voice to large parts of the population who feel left behind was stressed.** An optimistic tone prevailed during the panel, as the panellists agreed that the current challenges open up space for positive change. Regarding the role of the Balkans in the EU, it was pointed out that “Europe cannot go well if the Balkans does not go well.”

This year's BSF discussed another global challenge – propaganda and disinformation. The panel dedicated to this topic pointed out that news is increasingly becoming a business, meaning that the media has lost its educational role. It was also asserted that we currently live in a world in which objective facts do not matter, as news stories are made to appeal to people's emotions. **An interesting point made during the panel was that fake news is not so much a matter of communication but one of vulnerabilities that are already present, which are exploited by the creators of fake news.**

A related topic, the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution, was also discussed during BSF 2018. In an era of rapid progression of computer power, exponential growth of big data and smart technologies, economies need to adjust quickly. It was pointed out during the panel that the key word of the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution is actually not directly related to new technologies – inequality. **The panellists did not agree on whether the new revolution is progressive – some even challenged the term “revolution”, arguing that it dehumanizes modern industrial production and neglects human dignity, development and education.** The security challenges brought by the 4th Industrial Revolution were also discussed, with a focus on the emergence of powerful non-state actors.

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### Recommendations/action points:

- To be able to confront the challenges facing it, the EU must incorporate a wide range of voices and opinions in the debate about its reinvention.
- To combat propaganda and fake news, it is necessary to involve more people in public debates and enable people to think critically.
- To curb the negative effects of the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution, more regulation is needed – first on the national and then on the European level.
- It is crucial to adapt the education system to new technological developments.

### Tweets

**Boris Divjak @bdivjak3**

We might not like where we are today, but it seems this will be the new normal for a while in #SoutheastEurope. #BelSecForum  
<https://twitter.com/bdivjak3/status/1052822868042665985>

**Belgrade Forum @BelSecForum**

.@ecdrelre : There is an institutional will to overcome the separation in the #EU. But we need to shed this fear of populism. Populism could be our asset and an opportunity - it gives back the dignity to the people. #BelSecForum  
 #EUreform @eu\_eeas  
<https://twitter.com/BelSecForum/status/1052849678478450688>

**Dani Sandu @DaniSandu7** FollowFollow  
 @DaniSandu7

More  
 "We can use technology not to disinform in our own turn, but to better identify disinformation that is thrown at us" @OanaPope #BelSecForum  
<https://twitter.com/DaniSandu7/status/1053191417592463360>

**Belgrade Forum @BelSecForum**

Krasilshchikov @Instytut\_PIASt: The variety of choices and concrete decisions will depend on the social actors in this tech revolution. Many countries in mid-development state don't lack resources - they lack social actors capable of making adequate decisions. #BelSecForum  
<https://twitter.com/BelSecForum/status/1053224927237677056>

## BELGRADE SECURITY FORUM 2018

### Strategic goal 4: Strengthening the BSF community

The BSF addresses some topics regularly, whether as the main subjects of panels or as part of broader discussion. Some such topics are corruption, digitalization and security, as well as women in politics.

This year, the panel on high-level corruption and international security pointed out the danger to international security posed by “kleptocratic networks” around the world. The panel argued that corruption is a structural problem, meaning that the fight against it requires not only the change of (corrupt) governments but also comprehensive and systemic reforms. Moreover, one of the topics discussed was corruption in the defence sector and how it affects human and national security.

The panel dedicated to women in politics stressed that it is not the number of men and women in political institutions that is important, but rather a culture that favours masculinity. The panellists talked about the stereotypes and prejudices faced by women in our region today and urged the establishment of a policy of zero-tolerance of discrimination and misogyny. It was also argued that the quality of political dialogue increases when more women are involved.

Finally, the session “Securing the Digital Transformation of the Western Balkans” discussed the Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans, launched as part of the EU's enhancement of its engagement in the region. The challenges posed by digitalisation, such as cyber-attacks, were also discussed. While representatives of governments who participated in the panel expressed their largely positive attitude to the process and pace of digitalisation in the Western Balkans, representatives of the EU and the business sector warned of potential threats and stressed the need for faster adaptation.

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- If the fight against corruption is to be successful, civil society and the wider public must be involved in that fight.
- Education and employment are crucial if women's equal participation and equitable representation in political processes is to increase.
- The EU and countries outside the EU need to cooperate in fighting cyber-attacks and create a common space of resilience.



### Tweets

Jennifer Anderson @JennyLAnderson\_ #BelSecForum "greatest threat to international security and democratic governance are the increasingly integrated kleptocratic networks around the world" Sarah Cheyes  
[https://twitter.com/JennyLAnderson\\_/status/1052970560232271874?s=09&fbclid=IwAR0lo9W0o1njecB1K8vCNxLzzaPRDNIAR84FAG27KcGlueNmnOQEzdJBv4](https://twitter.com/JennyLAnderson_/status/1052970560232271874?s=09&fbclid=IwAR0lo9W0o1njecB1K8vCNxLzzaPRDNIAR84FAG27KcGlueNmnOQEzdJBv4)

Majlinda Bregu @MajlindaBregu  
 The region would be a different & better place if more women were in charge. #Education & #employment are crucial to increase #women's equal participation & equitable representation. We need a nuanced concrete approach to tackle the interconnected barriers women face. #BelSecForum  
<https://twitter.com/MajlindaBregu/status/1052967491494965251>

EU info centar @EUICBG  
 The strong signal is coming from the @EU\_Commission and commissioner @GabrielMariya on digital agenda in #WesternBalkans. "We are ready to help, the future is digital and I wish you great success", ambassador @FabriziSem #BelSecForum  
<https://twitter.com/EUICBG/status/1053188863437533185>

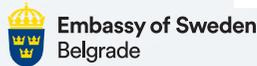
Organizers



Strategic Partners



Partners



Friends of the Forum



Strategic Media Partners



Audio&Video



Media Partners



Technical Support

